

How to Go to College

**THE COLLEGE AND
CAREER PLANNING HANDBOOK
FOR GRADES 10 THROUGH 12**



GEAR

UP



- ▶ **Getting Started** 3
Get the facts about college and life after high school.
- ▶ **Step 1: Discover Yourself** 6
Discover your strengths, weaknesses, abilities, and interests, and find out how they can help you get ready for the future.
- ▶ **Step 2: Explore Your Options** 8
Explore types of colleges, degrees, and careers. Learn how to research your career and college options and compare the ones that interest you.
- ▶ **Step 3: Set Goals** 14
Learn to set SMART career and academic goals.
- ▶ **Step 4: Develop an Action Plan** 16
See what colleges really want and plan to meet the requirements. Create your own high school road map with school and community activities, tests, and awards.
- ▶ **Step 5: Making It Happen** 28
Learn more about the admissions process and what happens to your application when you send it in. Find out how you can get the best possible letters of recommendation and write a great personal statement.
- ▶ **Finance Your Future** 34
Uncover the not-so-secret world of financial aid. Learn how you can pay for college and apply for aid.
- ▶ **Toolbox Additions** 42
Build your own college toolbox. Find out how to tackle big assignments and prepare for tests. Get advice on special issues like college sports, learning disabilities, being a student parent and more. Find out what questions you should ask before choosing a college.

Inside you'll find college and career planning information, worksheets, and activities that you can complete on your own, in small classroom groups, or with family and friends. A list of vocabulary and definitions is at the end of the book.

If you Can read **This,**
You're **College** **Material !**



Getting Started

Going to college might seem like a no-brainer, but how do you get ready? What are you going to study when you get there? And, what are you going to do after you've finished college? There are so many things to think about. Things can quickly become overwhelming. Our best advice? Take things one step at a time. Step by step, you can make sense of your options and future path.

Hey, it's true that some people are sure about their future path. That's great. But many teens struggle to find direction, and that's OK too. Don't freak out if it's your senior year and you're not yet sure, and don't focus too much on any one specific job. Wherever you are in the college and career planning process, keep your options open. This How to Go to College handbook can help.

In this book, you'll explore colleges and careers and learn to choose the right direction for you. You'll find out how to compare colleges, select a college major, and research job trends. You can read about college testing, applications, and financial aid—even complete worksheets to help you think through each step. There's a lot of information in this book. Take your time and read it carefully. What you learn might surprise you.

Learn for Life



By now you probably know that one of the best things you can do after high school is continue your education. Higher education opens windows of opportunity. It gives you the chance to try new things, meet new people, and add to your understanding of the world.

College also increases your chances of having the life and job you want. In most cases, the more education you have, the more careers and jobs you can choose from, and the more money you can earn.

Studies show that college graduates:

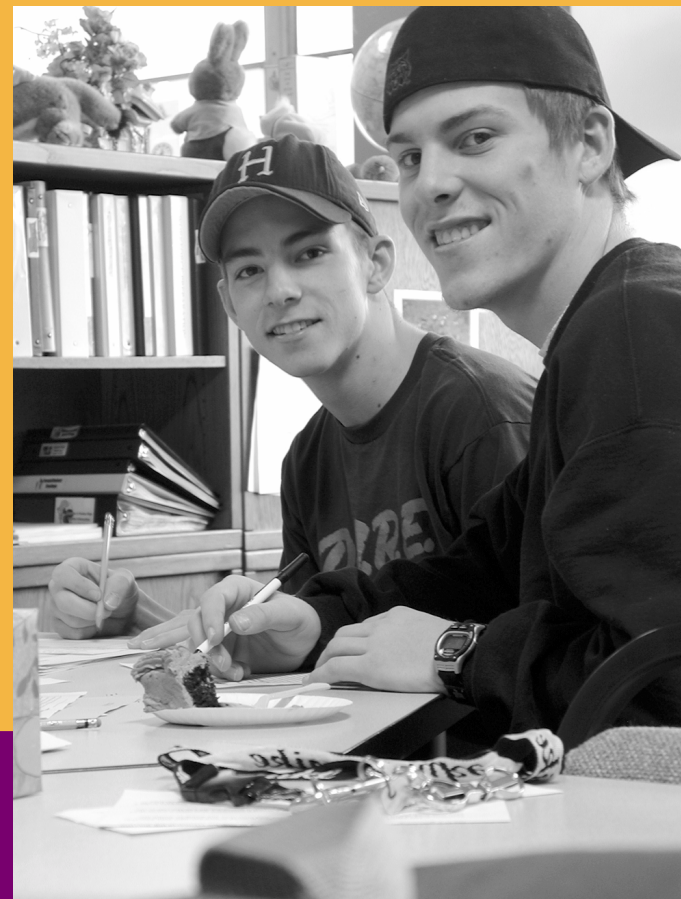
- ▶ Live longer
- ▶ Have better overall health
- ▶ Are less likely to be unemployed
- ▶ Are more likely to enjoy their work
- ▶ Can change careers more easily

It is important to go on learning, growing, and building your skills whatever job or career you choose. The workplace is changing fast. You will need to grow to keep up with all the changes. This attitude, called lifelong learning, applies to almost all jobs and careers.

Average yearly income of all workers ages 25 and up

Didn't finish high school	GED or high school diploma	Some college no degree	Associate's degree	Bachelor's degree or higher
\$14,349	\$23,233	\$27,260	\$31,684	\$53,043

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, 1999.



All right. Some of you might be thinking, "I'm not sure my grades are good enough for college and my family can't afford it." "I make enough money now, I'll be ok." Or, "I want to take a break after high school. It can't hurt." If you think like this, it's time to get some facts.

▮ **Grades and test scores do matter, but colleges look at other things too.**
Colleges don't usually have a firm "cutoff" for grades or test scores. Some colleges only require a high school diploma or GED certificate. In most cases, colleges look at the whole you, including your class schedule, activities, family situation, and potential for success. If you do your best work, focus on learning, get involved in activities, and plan ahead, you can go to college.

▮ **College isn't free. But financial aid helps families cover the costs.**
Colleges will expect you and your family to help pay for college, but the amount you pay is based on what you and your family can afford. When a family has done all it can, the government, colleges, and private groups offer financial aid to help.

▮ **Four-year colleges and universities aren't your only college option.**
In this handbook, you will see the word "college", but we really mean any kind of higher education. This includes any training program or school for high school graduates or people with GED certificates. Two-year colleges, Voc-tech programs, and trade schools count, too. The school or program you choose will depend on your individual abilities, interests, and goals.

▮ **Time off after high school has benefits and risks.**
Worried that you're not quite ready for college? Colleges don't usually hold time off against you. They know that breaks can give you time to work, explore, and mature. Students who start college later in life are often more dedicated and serious, too.

However, you take a risk when you take time off. Some students never go back to school or find school is tougher when they return. While you're out of school, you can forget things or slip into poor study habits. And many returning students have added responsibilities like working full-time or caring for a child. This can make it harder to focus on school.

If you're thinking about taking a break after high school, think very carefully. A delay might be a good idea, but you could be better off starting school right away.

Step 1: Discover Yourself

It sounds weird right?
Discover yourself?
It's not as if you've been hiding anywhere.

In this handbook, “discover yourself” means thinking about who you are and what you want for the future. This should be your first step. When you think about the activities and subjects you like, it's easier to match them with jobs, careers, and college majors (also called areas of concentration).

If you're a teen who already has some good ideas about colleges, jobs, and careers, it's still a good idea to work through this section. You might find that your interests have changed, or that another job or career more closely matches your ideal.

At this point, it's also a good idea to talk to someone you trust, like a family member, school counselor, teacher, or friend. School counselors often have interest inventories or short questionnaires to help you narrow your career focus. These can also help you learn about your strengths and weaknesses. Parents, friends, and teachers can also point out talents you didn't know you had. Consider your:

► Interests

These are things that you like to do or that you've always wanted to do. What are your favorite hobbies or pastimes? What school subjects do you enjoy? What sports do you play just for fun? Do you like to work with people, ideas, numbers and calculations, or things?

► Abilities

Abilities are things you can do well. What are your special talents or gifts? Are you a good listener, talker, artist, or mechanic? Are there things that just come naturally to you? If so, what are they?

► Values and Priorities

Values are a big part of who you are. They are not good or bad, right or wrong. They are simply personal rules or guidelines that help you decide what is important. Everyone's values are a little bit different. You might value family over friends, job satisfaction over money, or make homework your top priority. Each day you make choices based on what's most important to you. The job you do everyday, whether it's schoolwork or professional work, should reflect your values, too. So, what do you value, both now and for the future? What are your priorities?

Free interest inventories are available on the Internet. These can help you discover your interests and abilities.

- www.myroad.com
- www.ncsu.edu/careerkey/you
- www.review.com/career
- www.psychometrics.com/scales/values.htm

► Money Matters

What kind of lifestyle do you imagine for yourself? Is it important to have a big house and new car, or are your needs more modest? Are you planning to have a family someday? You might not be able to get by with a low-wage job if you have to care for someone else. Consider the education you will need to meet your financial responsibilities.

► Physical Factors

Physical challenges can be an important part of some jobs. You might be required to work outside, lift heavy objects, or maintain a fast pace. Decide how much physical labor you are willing or able to do. Also, think about any physical or learning challenges that might require some help.

► Academic Goals

How long do you want to stay in school? Many careers and professions require two, four, six, or even eight years of training after high school. What level of skill do you want to reach? And does this match your lifestyle preferences?

“Wisdom
begins
in
Wonder.”

-Socrates

Step 2: Explore Your Options

Have you ever noticed that sometimes your friend's shirt looks a lot better on your friend than on you? Don't you hate it when you see a CD you just bought for \$13.99 on sale for 10 bucks? And how in the heck does this relate to college and career planning, anyway? Good question.

Jobs, careers, and colleges are just like anything else you buy. Every job or college class costs you time, energy, and money. And there are good and bad college bargains out there. It's always best to shop around and compare your options. Then make the right choices for you.

Your college choices, just like your clothing choices should also reflect your tastes. What suits your friend may not work for you. You have your own unique interests and needs. Remember, an ugly shirt might cost you \$25.00, but college costs a whole lot more and all sales are final. Your best bet is to do some smart shopping before you spend your hard-earned cash.

Research and compare your options for the future, including career clusters, job opportunities, college degrees, and types of colleges. Think about how they match up with your interests from the last section.

Exploring Careers and Jobs

How many different jobs can you name? Most teens can name high-profile jobs like lawyer, doctor, dentist, and engineer, but what about jobs in art, radio and television, manufacturing, finance, construction, or scientific research. There are thousands of jobs to choose from. How can you find the one that's right for you?

A good place to start your search is with your school counselor or GEAR UP staff. Ask to take a career interest inventory. You may have already done this, but it doesn't hurt to do it again. These short quizzes ask you questions like: Do you like to draw, read, or solve puzzles? There is no right or wrong answer to the questions. Based on your answers, you'll get a list of career paths you can explore in depth.

Keep in mind, interest inventories point out a few career clusters, but the results are only suggestions. Your likes and dislikes may change over time. So, research all career groups and jobs that interest you, not just those suggested by your interest inventory.

“The
Greatest thing
in the World
is to know how to be
Self-sufficient.”

-Michel de Montaigne

Career Clusters

Career clusters are groups of jobs or professions that require similar interests, skills, and abilities. Jobs can fit into more than one career cluster. Web designers, for example, mix business, technology, and graphic design. Look for careers that combine all of your interests and skills.

Career Cluster	Agriculture and Natural Resources	Art, Media, Design, and Communications	Manufacturing, Construction, and Transportation	Business, Management, and Finance	Education, Social, and Health Services	Services and Hospitality	Engineering, Science, and Technology	Machine Repair and Operations
Career Focus	Working with and managing resources in the natural world.	Using ideas and information to communicate with people.	Working with objects to create, move, change, or build things.	Working with data, numbers, and people in the business world.	Working to help people and solve social problems.	Working to meet the comfort and recreational needs of people.	Using ideas to develop, change, or understand things.	Using data and information to operate or repair things.
More Information	Agriculture and natural resources work is often done in open outdoor spaces. Many people work 50 hours or more each week. Educational requirements vary widely.	Communications professions are very competitive. Creativity, reading, writing, and critical thinking are very important. Educational requirements vary widely.	Industrial careers usually require on-the-job or apprenticeship training that can last up to five years. Generally, workers must be in good physical condition.	Management professionals usually work in offices with computers, budgets, and accounts. These jobs often require a two- or four-year degree.	Human services workers need excellent communication skills. Most jobs in this cluster require at least two years of college and many require more.	This is the largest cluster of jobs in the U.S. Many require on-the-job training only. However, some positions do require a college degree, license, or certificate.	Workers in this cluster design structures, improve technology, and develop new medicines. These jobs typically require at least a four-year degree.	Equipment operators and repairers work in offices, homes, businesses, construction areas, and more. Most jobs require on-the-job or apprenticeship training.
Sample Jobs	Farmer/Rancher Veterinarian Timber Harvester Forest Ranger Geologist Surveyor	Actor Graphic Designer Spokesperson Librarian Director Journalist	General Contractor Millwright Plumber Truck Driver Electrician Line Worker	Accountant Stock Broker Business Owner Manager Marketing Specialist Secretary	Teacher Social Worker Police Officer Firefighter Doctor Physical Therapist	Hotel Clerk Cosmetologist Travel Agent Hostess Flight Attendant Cashier	Engineer Programmer Scientist Architect Computer Systems Analyst	HVAC Technician Air Traffic Controller Cable Technician Data Entry Clerk Auto Mechanic TV/VCR Repairman

Researching Careers

Once you've decided on two or three career clusters that interest you, find out what they're like in the real world. What can you expect to earn? What are the working conditions like? How many jobs will be open in the future? It's important to know what careers and jobs are really like before you decide on a job, college, or major.

There are several ways to get this information. The U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics Online, www.bls.gov, has information about career clusters in the *Career Guide to Industries*. The career guide tells you which skills, abilities, and interests are important for each career cluster, what jobs are available, and what pay and benefits you can expect.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics Online also has information about specific jobs. Every two years, the bureau publishes the *Occupational Outlook Handbook*. This tells you what workers do on the job, how much training and education is needed, and how many jobs will be available in the future. All of these things can help you decide if a career cluster or job is right for you.

Finally, you might be able to use the Washington Occupation Information System (WOIS) in your school library or guidance office. WOIS has information on over 500 jobs and over 400 education programs. It includes almost all recognized schools in Washington, and helps you learn more about the job market.

If you don't have Internet access, many public libraries have hard copies of the *Career Guide to Industries* and the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* for you to review. And, talk to your school or guidance counselor. He/she can usually give you information about careers in your own city or town.

“Research
is formalized.
curiosity.
It is poking and prying with a
purpose.”



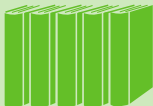

-Zora Neale Hurston


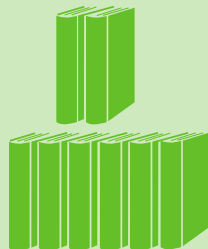

Opportunities for Success

Different careers require different types of education and training. Some degrees can be completed in a short time; others take longer. Some are specific, focusing on the skills and knowledge you need for a particular job; others are more broad. On the next page you'll find a chart that explains the type of education required for different jobs.

Most college degree programs are divided into undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs. Undergraduate programs are usually for people who don't have a four-year bachelor's degree. Graduate programs are higher degrees for people who have already earned a four-year degree. And professional programs offer more advanced degrees for professions like medical and veterinary science, social work, and law.

If you haven't already explored the career clusters and jobs that interest you, take time to do that now. What kind of higher education do they require?

Undergraduate Programs	Degree/Program	Job Description	How Long?
	CERTIFICATE	<p>Some certificates prepare you for entry-level professional jobs, like legal assistant or secretary. Others add to the education you already have and increase your existing job skills, like emergency medical technicians.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bookkeeper Day Care Worker Medical or Dental Assistant Truck Driver 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High school diploma or GED 1 to 2 years 
	APPRENTICESHIP	<p>Apprenticeship programs combine classroom study with on-the-job training. Apprentices or trainees learn skilled trades, like plumbing, masonry, firefighting, or carpentry.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stone Mason Welder Fire Fighter Electrician 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High school diploma or GED 2 to 3 years 
	ASSOCIATE'S DEGREE	<p>Associate's degrees often concentrate on the skills you need for a specific career, like electronics or early childhood education. With some associate's degrees, you can transfer to a four-year college, complete just two more years of college, and get a bachelor's degree.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administrative Assistant Engineering Technician Human Resources Specialist Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High school diploma or GED 2 to 4 years 
	BACHELOR'S DEGREE	<p>Bachelor's or four-year degrees can be used for many different careers. They require general and specific courses. Usually, students choose one or two subjects to study in depth. These subjects are called majors or areas of concentration. Teachers, writers, engineers, and entry-level managers usually have these degrees.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Architect Cartoonist Computer Programmer Stock Broker 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High school diploma or GED 4 to 6 years 

Graduate and Professional Programs	Degree/Program	Job Description	How Long?
	MASTER'S DEGREE	<p>Master's degree students usually have a bachelor's degree, some work experience, and the desire to continue studying a subject. These programs add to the information you learn in undergraduate classes and help you advance your career. People often earn Master of Business Administration (MBA) degrees to get ahead in the business world.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physician Assistant (PA) Hospital Administrator Marriage and Family Counselor School Principal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High school diploma or GED 6 to 8 years 
	PROFESSIONAL DEGREE	<p>Professional programs require advanced study of a specific profession like veterinary science, law, or social work. To work in these career fields, you often have to pass a state or national exam. Professional degree programs prepare you for the exams and the work world. Professional degrees include MD for doctors, DDS for dentists, and JD for lawyers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chiropractor Pharmacist Priest or Minister Social Worker 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High school diploma or GED 7 to 9 years 
	DOCTORAL DEGREE	<p>Doctoral (PhD) degrees are the highest degrees offered by colleges. They are awarded in broad subjects like history, biology, and music. These programs can take many years to complete. Doctoral candidates must research an original topic, write a lengthy research paper, and defend their research in front of a panel of experts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> College Professor Economist Psychologist District Superintendent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High school diploma or GED 8 to 10 years 

Types of Colleges

Now that you have some idea about the type of degree or education you will need to get the career you want, you might like to know which schools and colleges offer those programs.

Four-year colleges and universities

are popular choices for students who go to college right after high school. These can be public, like the University of Washington, or, private, like Gonzaga University. State and federal governments manage public colleges, and private organizations and religious groups run private colleges. Both types offer certificates, bachelor’s (sometimes called four-year degrees), master’s, professional, and doctorate degrees in areas like business administration, history, or biology.

Two-year colleges

are usually called community and technical colleges. In some areas they are called junior colleges. Examples of these include Big Bend Community College and Lake Washington Technical College. These schools offer associate’s degrees (sometimes called two-year degrees) and certificate programs. Washington community and technical colleges teach specific subjects like computer programming, graphic design, early childhood education, automotive technology, and general subjects like history, math, and English. With some two-year degrees, you can transfer directly to a four-year school.

Private vocational colleges

are sometimes called voc-tech or trade schools. They often partner with unions and trade groups to offer apprentice and journeyman programs in fields like plumbing, carpentry, or welding. The length of each program varies, but many can take three or more years to complete.

Proprietary or for-profit schools

can offer master’s and bachelor’s degrees, but most offer associate’s degrees or certificates in office management, medical assistance, cosmetology, dental hygiene, computer systems engineering, and more. Examples of these schools include the University of Phoenix, Bryman Technical College, and Clare’s Beauty College. Again, the length of each program varies. Many take less than one year to complete.

To search for more information about colleges and universities visit:

- College is Possible www.collegeispossible.org
- College Net, college searches www.collegenet.com
- College Express www.collegexpress.com
- Making School Count www.makingitcount.com

Guaranteed Admissions

If you earn a qualified associate of arts or science degree at a Washington community or technical college with at least a 2.0 GPA, you are guaranteed admission to any four-year public college or university in the state. Simply apply to the four-year school, transfer your associate’s degree coursework, go to school for another two years, and complete your bachelor’s degree! Check with colleges for specific details.

Military Careers and Colleges

Sometimes students want career training that's different than the normal college routine. The U.S. Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marines, National Guard, and Navy are good examples. They offer more than 4,100 different jobs, training programs and college options to get you ready for a military career.

Before you decide on this type of career, you should know some basic facts about military life. First, military jobs can be full-time (active duty) or part-time (reserve duty) and you don't have to enlist right after high school. You can join after college, during college, or even go to a four-year military academy to become an officer. Officers are supervisors and leaders.

Even in the military, a college degree or higher education helps you get ahead. Going to college shows that you are committed to being the best service member you can be. And, if you know more and can do more than others, you are more likely to be promoted or advanced.

In addition to physical fitness, good grades in math, science, and language classes can boost your odds of working in elite fields. Many military jobs use high tech equipment or require advanced training.

You can also explore military life without making a long-term commitment. Some high schools have Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps programs (JROTC) that let you see what military life is like while you're still in high school. These programs may include summer camps, study help, and leadership training. Check with your school counselor for more information.

Finally, it's important to remember that your first job in the military is to defend the country, wherever that takes you in the world. If you're thinking about a military career, explore your options, talk to service members or recruiters, and ask lots of questions. Military life is not for everyone, so make sure you get all the facts.

For more information about military careers and education programs, visit:

Information, all branches of service	www.todaysmilitary.com
Army	www.goarmy.com
Navy	www.navyjobs.com
Air Force	www.airforce.com
Marines	www.marines.com
Coast Guard	www.gocoastguard.com
National Guard	www.ngb.dtic.mil

For more information about the U.S. military academies, visit:

U.S. Military Academy in West Point, New York	www.usma.edu
U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland	www.usna.edu
U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado	www.usafa.edu
U.S. Coast Guard Academy in New London, Connecticut	www.cga.edu

► The Service Academies

The government runs these famous military colleges. They have names like West Point and Annapolis. Students, called cadets, don't pay any tuition or fees and get a monthly allowance. Graduates agree to serve on active duty for at least five years. These are very competitive schools and it is hard to get in. If you're interested, meet with your school counselor or GEAR UP staff at the end of your junior year or very early in your senior year.

► Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC)

During college, and on top of regular classes, students (cadets) in ROTC take short military science courses. They also wear uniforms once a week and participate in military training during the summer. After graduation, cadets become full military officers. Some colleges do not offer ROTC, so check with the admissions office at your college of choice.

► Officer Candidate Schools (OCS) or Officer Training Schools (OTS)

Any college graduate under age 26 can apply to go to an OCS or OTS. Adults over 26 can request to have the age limit waived. These schools are 10- to 17-week programs. They offer demanding physical and leadership training. When the training is complete, graduates receive a commission and become military officers.

Step 3: Set Goals

OK. You've got some general job and career ideas and learned about some college options. What's the next step? Commit to your dreams. Start setting goals.

Goals are kind of like the North Star; they help guide you toward something you want to achieve. Setting and reaching goals helps you focus your efforts, increase your drive, and improve your self-esteem. When you are focused on a goal, you are less likely to be distracted by small or unimportant things. You might still take a detour, but at least you know where you're headed.

Setting SMART Goals

All goals are not created equal. SMART goals challenge you to get things done before a deadline. They also help you track your progress and record your achievements. Not-so-SMART goals can be unclear, unrealistic, and difficult to reach. SMART goals are:

S

Specific and clear

For example, instead of saying, "My goal is to be a doctor." Try, "I will earn an M.D. degree by my 30th birthday." Be specific about what you want to accomplish and when you plan to finish.

M

Measurable

With a SMART goal, you can set up milestones along the way to measure your progress. If your goal is simply to go to college, how will you track your progress? If you want a four-year bachelor's degree by age 24, your milestones could be taking geometry by 10th grade and earning a high school grade point average (GPA) of 3.33 or better.

A

Achievable and ambitious

Make sure your goals are reasonable, too. If your goal is set too high, you might get discouraged and give up. If your goal isn't challenging enough, you could miss out on a sense of achievement when you reach the finish line. Decide what information or help you will need. What stands between you and your goal? Allow plenty of time to get information and overcome any challenges.

R

Relevant to you

It is easy to let other people set goals for you based on what they want. But goals set by others can be tough to reach because your heart isn't in it. SMART goals are important to you.

T

Full of trial and error

Your interests change as you grow older and gain experience. Goals that fit you now may not suit you later. Don't be afraid to get off track, make mistakes, or adjust your goals. Be determined and persistent as you go after your dreams, but don't feel obligated to follow a goal as your life and interests change.

No matter how hard you try to set a smart goal and stick to it, you might discover that your goal is too easy, too hard, or just not right for you. If that happens, try to figure out why.

- ▶ Do you need to put in more effort?
Maybe you should take a break and refocus on your goal.
- ▶ Do you need more information?
If so, talk to a family member, friend, or counselor for help.
- ▶ Was your goal unrealistic?
Rethink your options and possible next steps.
- ▶ Or, did something beyond your control cause problems for you?
You might just need to get back into a groove and try again.

Take time to evaluate your progress, adjust your goals, and celebrate your achievements.



Step 4: Develop an Action Plan

Phew, you're halfway there. You have interests, career ideas, college options, and goals. Now, you need an action plan to help you put it all together.

Think about it. If your goals are a guiding star in the sky, then your action plan is a road map that shows where you're going and where you've been. Making a plan and sticking with it is one of the most important steps in college and career planning.

If it's starting to seem like the whole college thing is a lot of work, it is. Sometimes people make it look easy. They know which classes to take, and they know which way to go. But not everyone starts the college and career planning process with the same knowledge or skills.

So, in this section, you'll find out how to plan for college admissions and a career and what your plan should include. You'll learn about advanced classes and standardized tests. You'll even be able to fill in your own planning worksheets to track your progress and get ready for college.

Again, it's a good idea to visit with your school counselor, teacher, parents, and GEAR UP staff as you make your plans. This is one step where you don't want to leave anything out.

Graduating from High School...

The first part of your plan should be making sure you're on track to finish high school.

To graduate from a Washington high school, you need to take classes in English, social studies, math, science, occupational education, Washington state history, health or physical education (PE), and other electives. Washington high schools will also require senior projects or portfolios beginning with the class of 2004. This may seem like a ton of rules, but you will still be able to focus on classes and subjects that you like...if you plan ahead.

High school graduation requirements vary from school to school and district to district. All graduates must meet minimum standards, and you'll learn about those here. But your high school or school district can add on extra requirements. Make sure you check with your school counselor to find out what the exact requirements are for your school.

High school graduation requirements are not the same as college admission requirements.

Be Prepared for Everything

Why does a writer need to know complex math? Why does a scientist need to understand Shakespeare? The truth is, core courses like math, science, English, and history teach you how to read, write, think, reason, and compute. They also help you understand the world and your fellow human beings. They help you develop critical thinking and problem solving skills—skills that will help you throughout your life. Make sure you prepare for everything. Take a series of tough core courses throughout high school.

Getting Ready for College...

Once you know you're on track to finish high school, it's time to think about beefing up your course schedule. The fact is, the courses you need for high school graduation might not be what you need to get into the college or training program you want. However, you can increase your chances by taking tough high school classes, earning college credits in high school, gaining job skills, and testing your progress. Check out the next few pages for ideas.

Saying is
One Thing,
Doing is
Another.

This chart shows Washington's minimum high school graduation requirements as of September 2001 and recommended college prep courses for high school students.

Your high school or college of choice might have additional requirements. Talk to your principal or school counselor for more information.

	Minimum State Requirements for High School Graduation	Minimum State Requirements for Four-Year Public Colleges and Universities	Recommended Courses for Highly Selective Colleges and Universities
English	3 years	4 years	4 years
Math (algebra or higher)	2 years	3 years	3-4 years
Science (one must be a lab)	2 years	2 years	3-4 years
Social studies (including Washington state history)	2.5 years	3 years	3-4 years
Work-related education	1 year	None	None
World Language (same language)	None	2 years	3-4 years
Fine, visual, performing arts or academic elective, or choose an extra class from those listed above	1 year	1 year	2-3 years
Health and physical education	2 years	None	None
Electives	5.5 years	None	Varies
Senior project	Class of '04+	None	None
Certificate of Mastery (pass 10th grade WASL)	Class of '08+	None	None
Minimum Grade Point Average	None	2.00	Varies

Earn College Credits in High School

You can increase your odds of getting into a four-year college by taking Advanced Placement, Running Start, International Baccalaureate, or Tech Prep classes. These aren't required for high school graduation, and they do take hard work. But students in these programs can graduate from high school with a two-year degree already completed or save on college costs by completing a degree faster.

If you think you're up to the AP, IB, or Running Start challenge, meet with your school counselor. They can give you more information about programs at your school. And, check with some colleges to find out which tests they accept for credit and what scores you will need.

► Advanced Placement (AP®)

AP® courses offer college level coursework in high schools. Classes are offered in calculus, history, physics, chemistry, world languages, and more. All classes count toward high school graduation. If you want college credit, you can take an end-of-the-year exam that covers all of the course material. The test is not required and does cost money, but fee waivers are available. Colleges generally give credits for test scores of three or better.

► International Baccalaureate (IB)

The IB program is similar to AP®, but is offered at select schools. IB concentrates on multi-subject and international study more than AP® and Running Start. Students enrolled in IB can earn a special diploma by taking IB courses and passing several comprehensive examinations. College credit is usually given for test scores of five or better.

Don't Take No for An Answer!

If you're doing well in your regular classes and think you can handle an advanced course, why not give it a try? Sometimes, others will suggest easier courses when a challenge is what you really need to get your brain in tip-top shape. You know yourself better than anyone else. If necessary, get a parent or a trusted teacher to help you get the classes you want. Class choices can be critical decisions—don't let someone else make them for you. Go for it!

► Running Start

Running Start allows you to take academic classes at many public colleges and universities and get double credit for high school and college. You can earn a high school diploma and associate's degree at the same time. You do not have to pay tuition at the local college, but you do have to buy textbooks for each class and pay some required fees. A placement test is also required. Check with your guidance counselor or local college or university for details. School advisors will help you make sure the Running Start classes you take meet your high school graduation requirements.

► College in the high school

Instead of going to a college or university to take classes, let college come to you! College in the high school allows high school teachers to work for a college or university and a high school at the same time. Regular high school teachers offer college level classes in English, math, history, and more. Students who receive a grade of B or better can get college credit. Check with your high school counselor for more information. Not all high schools participate in this program.

► Tech Prep

Tech Prep is a two- or four-year program that begins in high school. Local community and technical colleges agree to accept credits from your regular high school classes if you earn a B or better. After high school, you'll be able to go straight into some community and technical college programs. This can save you and your family time and money. Check with your school counselor for details.



Get Job Skills In High School

Whatever college you choose, your plans should include more than just the classes you take. College degrees alone don't guarantee success. Experience counts, too. Try to include activities like working and job training in your college and career plans. Just remember not to overdo it. School is your first priority.

Employers and colleges prefer people who have a wide range of skills. Job, volunteer, and training experiences can help you develop those skills and show that you're responsible, mature, and trustworthy. And in most cases, more experience means better earning potential and opportunities. You can get work and leadership experience in high school with:

“Real.
Generosity
towards
the future
lies in
giving all to the
Present.”
-Albert Camus

► AmeriCorps

AmeriCorps is a national community service program. Young volunteers (ages 18 and up) clean up parks, paint buildings, and assist people in need. Some volunteers even earn scholarships for college. To learn more about AmeriCorps and other national community service programs, visit <http://www.americorps.org> and <http://www.wa.gov/wcnscs>.

► Internships

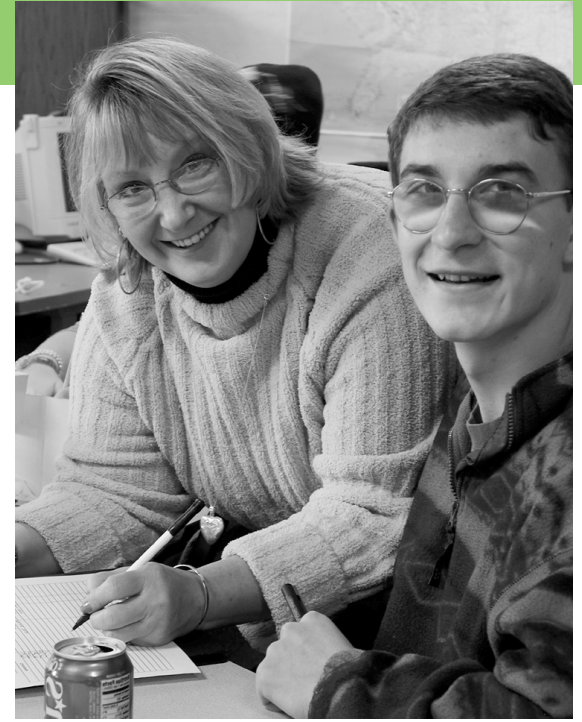
Internships, like paying jobs, give you hands-on experience with careers that interest you. Usually, you work with a mentor to establish your goals and job responsibilities. Internships are available through hospitals, senior citizen facilities, law enforcement agencies, and many private businesses. Talk to your school counselor about this option.

► Job shadowing

Some professionals allow students to observe what they do on the job. This is called job shadowing. Often you can learn how people behave at work and what's expected of employees on the job. Your school counselor or GEAR UP staff may be able to recommend someone you could shadow.

► Junior ROTC

Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) is a high school class that gives you a crash course in military culture. Cadets wear uniforms once a week and on special occasions. Some also go to summer camps to play team sports, train on obstacle courses, and learn land navigation and water safety techniques. Talk to your school counselor or a military recruiter for more information.



► Occupational classes

Many high schools offer courses in debate or public speaking, computer keyboarding, woodworking, hospitality, welding, and even computer network maintenance. Take advantage of these classes to develop your workplace skills.

► Pre-apprenticeship training

Pre-apprenticeship training programs help students improve their basic skills and get ready for apprenticeship programs. If you're interested in an apprenticeship and you want to get a head start, find a training program near you: <http://www.lni.wa.gov/scs/apprenticeship/preappren.htm>

► Volunteer work

Community volunteer work can help build your teamwork and leadership skills. You could learn carpentry by helping build homes for needy families, or practice your communication skills by talking with residents at a retirement home. Check with your school counselor, GEAR UP staff, or chamber of commerce to find organizations in your area that need volunteers. Many have volunteer coordinators specifically trained to match your interests with their needs.

Test Your Progress

Everyone wants to see how different students and schools compare. That's why there are so many standardized tests. Educators, communities, and government officials use them to make sure your school is doing a good job. And since students come from all over the world to attend U.S. colleges and universities, colleges need some way to compare the students who want to get in. Standardized tests don't just help adults, though. They are a tool to help you learn, too.

Tests can give you the chance to see how you're doing and show you where you need help. But this only works when you do your best each time. When your scores come back, check to see what you did well and where you can improve. Make each test a learning tool to help you reach your goals.

There are many standardized tests out there, and you might wonder which ones you should take. Some standardized tests are required, some are recommended, and some are just for your own practice. You do not need to take them all, and you can take some as many times as you like. Here you'll find a short description of the tests you should know about. Take some time to look at each of them, see how they're used, and what they can do for you.

Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL)

This is a series of state tests given to all students in Washington. It tests reading, writing, listening, and mathematics skills. Questions are multiple-choice, short answer, and essay. Beginning with the class of 2008, students must pass the 10th-grade WASL tests to earn a Certificate of Mastery and graduate from high school. In 2010, the Certificate of Mastery will also be required for admission to Washington's public four-year colleges and universities. High schools usually announce WASL test dates well in advance. You do not need to sign up for WASL testing, and it doesn't cost you anything.

ASVAB

The ASVAB (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery) is an optional test. It is mainly used as a military recruitment tool, and it doesn't cost you anything. It tells you which military jobs you qualify for and lets you to see how you compare to students across the nation. This test is mostly for high school juniors and seniors, but sophomores can take it, too. If you're interested, contact your school counselor or a military recruiter.

Which is best for you? The ACT® Assessment or the SAT I® test?

Most colleges will accept either ACT® or SAT I® scores in college admissions. But these tests are not the same. Many students do better on one than the other, and you can take both. Here's a quick comparison of the two tests.

ACT® Assessment

- Includes a science reasoning section
- Includes trigonometry questions
- Vocabulary words are in context
- 100% multiple choice test
- Does not subtract points for wrong answers
- Math makes up 25% of your score
- You can choose which scores to report

SAT I® Test

- Does not include a science section
- Does not include trigonometry questions
- Vocabulary words are not in context
- Includes short answer questions and a writing section
- Subtracts partial points for some wrong answers
- Math makes up 50% of your score
- You cannot choose which scores to report

For more information about pre-college tests and admissions exams visit:

PLAN® www.act.org/plan
ACT® www.act.org/aap
PSAT®, SAT I®, and SAT II® www.collegeboard.com/testing
Advanced Placement (AP®) Exams www.collegeboard.com/testing
International Baccalaureate (IB) Programme www.ibo.org

▶ PLAN®

The PLAN® test is like the college admission test, ACT®, and tells you how well you might do on the ACT® Assessment. It is suggested for 10th grade students. PLAN® helps you figure out what you have learned in school so far and what you need to work on next. It has four sections: English, math, reading, and science reasoning. It helps you learn where you are compared to other students your age. PLAN® also has an interest inventory built in. Schools that offer this test usually offer it in the fall. The test is sometimes free. Check with your school counselor for details.

Paying for College Tests and Applications

Admissions tests and college applications do cost money, but fee waivers are available for juniors and seniors who cannot afford to pay. Most testing fee waivers can be used in the junior or senior year, but not both. See your school counselor or GEAR UP staff for more information.

▶ PSAT®/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (NMQST)™

PSAT® is similar to the SAT I® college admission test and predicts how well you might do on the SAT I® test. The PSAT® is recommended for high school juniors. It tests your verbal and math ability with questions about sentence structure, analogies, reading comprehension, and math concepts. It also has a writing section.

PSAT® is also used to choose semi-finalists for the National Merit® Scholarship Program, National Achievement® Scholarship Program, and National Hispanic Recognition Program. These are very prestigious awards.

Students who take this test can check 'Yes' to the Student Search Service®. This allows colleges, universities, and scholarship programs to send you information at home. Students may take PSAT® for practice in 10th grade, then again in the 11th grade to be considered for the scholarship. PSAT® is given in October and costs about \$10. See your school counselor or GEAR UP staff for more information.

▶ ACT®

The ACT® Assessment is one of two tests most colleges use to admit new students. Like the PLAN® test, it helps you figure out how much you've learned in school and what you know how to do.

ACT® sections include math, English, reading, and science reasoning. There is also a built-in interest inventory to help you think about careers.

Most counselors recommend that juniors take ACT® in February, April, or June. Seniors should take it in September, October, or December. Each test costs about \$25. Ask your school counselor or GEAR UP staff for a registration packet or fee waiver.

▶ SAT I® and SAT II®

SAT I® is the other test colleges often use to admit freshmen. It is very similar to the PSAT®. It tests the verbal and math reasoning skills you've learned in and out of school and asks grammar, analogy, reading comprehension, and math questions. SAT I® tests cost about \$25 each. See your school counselor for fee waivers and registration packets.

SAT II® tests are often called subject tests. For about an hour, you answer questions about specific school subjects, like, U.S. history, chemistry, or French. In most cases, students take SAT II® tests in addition to the SAT I® or ACT®. Some colleges use them to place students in higher-level classes. Prices vary, and fee waivers are available. See your school counselor or GEAR UP staff for a registration packet.



Create A High School Plan

Now you know what it takes to graduate from high school. You know what colleges are looking for. You even know what kinds of tests you'll have to take and which classes can give you a head start. It's time to combine all of that knowledge in your own high school planner.

It's up to you to challenge yourself with core classes and after-school activities. Parents, school counselors, friends, and others can give you information and help you along the way. But it's your responsibility to do your best work. A personal planner can help you with this.

Why is this important? Hello? Remember you have to apply to get into most colleges. College applications ask you all sorts of questions like, what classes did you take? What awards have you received and, what activities have you participated in? By the time you're a senior, you might forget the things you did as a freshman or sophomore. Keeping track of your progress is a good way to avoid confusion later on. It also shows you where you need more work. When you sit down to fill out your applications, you'll know exactly what you've done during your high school years. See the sample on the next page.

In your own planner, you can record the classes you take (or plan to take) each semester. You can make sure you're taking enough tough classes for college or the world of work. And, you can keep track of your test scores, awards, and activities. There are blank planners on pages 48-51 to help you get started, and your GEAR UP staff can give you a larger version if you're interested.

GOALS		Student Name: <i>John P. Doe</i> School Counselor: <i>Mr. Smithers</i>							
		Goal(s) for the Year: <i>GET AT LEAST A 3.0 GPA EVERY QUARTER, FINISH ALL ASSIGNMENTS ON TIME, AND GET AT LEAST 1000 ON MY SAT'S AND 21 ON MY ACT</i> <i>I ALSO WANT TO DO AT LEAST 200 HOURS OF COMMUNITY SERVICE.</i>							
CHECKLIST AND TIMELINE	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER	JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH - MAY	JUNE - AUGUST	
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Get organized <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Start a calendar with all test names, registration dates, and fees as well as admissions and financial aid deadlines <input type="checkbox"/> Start a folder to file all correspondence <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Choose top 5 colleges and get applications <input type="checkbox"/> If applying early decision, check with admissions office for application and deadlines <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sign up for October or November ACT [®] and/or SAT I [®] and SAT II [®] tests	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Request letters of recommendation <input type="checkbox"/> Ask teachers, counselors, GEAR UP staff and others to help you with your personal essays <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Take SAT I [®] , SAT II [®] , and/or ACT [®] exams <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Attend college fairs <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Visit/tour colleges <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ask colleges about financial aid forms <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Meet with your school counselor to check up <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Keep up with grades and homework <input type="checkbox"/> Save money for prom, pictures, and more	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Get financial aid applications from colleges <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Work on admissions applications <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Send high school transcripts to colleges <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Males 18 and up must register for Selective Service to get federal financial aid. Register online at www.sss.gov <input type="checkbox"/> Take SAT I [®] , SAT II [®] , and/or ACT [®] exams <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If necessary, register to retake SAT [®] and/or ACT [®] tests in December or January <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Apply for scholarships	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Get a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) from your high school, college, or www.fafsa.ed.gov . Begin working on it. Do not send it in before January 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Filing the FAFSA online? Request a Personal ID Number (PIN) from the website <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Save December pay stubs to complete FAFSA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Apply for scholarships <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mail admissions applications, if due <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Do colleges have your recommendations?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Submit FAFSA January 1 <input type="checkbox"/> If due, mail admissions applications and/or make sure they've been received <input type="checkbox"/> Make sure colleges have your letters of recommendation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Keep copies of all forms you mail <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ask your parents to complete tax returns early this year. Schools may want a tax return to prove financial aid eligibility. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mail end-of-semester transcripts to colleges <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Apply for scholarships	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Make sure FAFSA is mailed and received. Call 1-800-433-3243 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> When you get your Student Aid Report (SAR) make sure your colleges are listed <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If the SAR asks for updated information, or you need to make a correction, do so ASAP. Failure to respond could cost you financial aid <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> College admissions letters start to go out <input type="checkbox"/> Send end-of-trimester transcripts to colleges <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Apply for scholarships	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Contact financial aid offices to see if your application's complete <input type="checkbox"/> If you're not admitted to any colleges, see your school counselor for guidance <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Review financial aid awards from colleges. You may need to sign and return one copy <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Decide which school to attend and notify all colleges by May 1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Apply for campus housing <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Respond to all letters from your college of choice by due date!	<input type="checkbox"/> Finalize summer school or job plans <input type="checkbox"/> Double check campus housing arrangements <input type="checkbox"/> Participate in freshman orientation and tour programs <input type="checkbox"/> Take any required placement tests <input type="checkbox"/> Save money for college expenses <input type="checkbox"/> HAVE FUN!!!	
CLASS GRADES	1ST QUARTER		2ND QUARTER		3RD QUARTER		4TH QUARTER		
	CLASS	GRADE	CLASS	GRADE	CLASS	GRADE	CLASS	GRADE	
	ENGLISH 12	B+	ENGLISH 12	B+	ENGLISH 12	A-	ENGLISH 12		
	ALGEBRA 2	C+	ALGEBRA 2	C	TRIGONOMETRY	C	TRIG.		
	PHYSICS	C	PHYSICS	B-	PHYSICS	C+	PHYSICS		
	SPANISH 7	A-	SPANISH 7	A	SPANISH 8	A	SPANISH 8		
	AP GOVT. AND POLITICS	B+	AP GOVT. AND POLITICS	B	ECONOMICS	B+	ECONOMICS		
	OFFICE AIDE	A	OFFICE AIDE	A	OFFICE AIDE	A	OFFICE AIDE		
YEARBOOK	A	YEARBOOK	A	YEARBOOK	A	YEARBOOK			
				SENIOR PROJECT	N/A	SENIOR PROJECT			
	TERM GPA	3.24		TERM GPA	3.29		TERM GPA	3.34	
TEST SCORES	SAT I SAT II ACT COMPOSITE			HS GRADUATION & COLLEGE REQUIREMENTS					
	SAT I	SAT II	ACT COMPOSITE	Each box equals 1 year of study. Colored boxes are the minimum required for HS graduation and admission to Washington's public 4-year colleges and universities. Your HS or college of choice may require more.					
	V 540 M 560	Test Score: Test Score:	24	Language and English..... <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Mathematics..... <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Science..... <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> World Language..... <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Social Studies/History..... <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Physical Education..... <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Arts or Academic Elective..... <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Work-Related Education..... <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Other Electives (choose several from the unshaded boxes)..... <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other Requirements (specify below)..... <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <u>SENIOR PROJECT</u>					
ACTIVITIES & AWARDS	YOUTH GROUP, SENIOR CLASS TREASURER, COMMUNITY VOLUNTEER (320 HOURS)								

Final Planning Tips

► Keep your options open.

Your interests and plans may change over the years, so it's a good idea to take challenging classes every year. Then you'll be better prepared for higher education or work, whichever you choose. As your interests and needs change, you might take different classes or decide to take a class during a different school year. Just remember to stick with a plan. These help you stay organized and on track for college and beyond.

► Stand out.

Make sure you record unusual travel, leadership activities, talents, and awards. Your unique abilities and experiences can help you stand out in a crowded field of applicants. Think about things you might like to get involved in that may help distinguish you from your peers.

► Get it in writing and share it with others.

Write your goals and plans down on paper and post them where you can see them. Putting your plans down in black and white will make them more real. They'll serve as a constant reminder of what you're working toward. Plus, sharing your plans with parents, friends, teachers, or counselors helps everyone get involved in supporting you. Family, friends, and other supporters can help you stay focused and encourage you if you struggle.

► Get involved in activities, study hard, and do your best.

Colleges and employers want to see plenty of effort, tough classes, solid test scores, and a history of participation and leadership. Good grades or test scores are important to colleges. But that's not the only important factor. Most colleges look at how well you've done and how hard you've worked. Many colleges would rather see a so-so grade in a tougher course than an "easy A."

► Use resources.

You might need information from the Internet or library, family support, tutoring, or a quiet place to study. Whatever tools or resources you need to reach your goals, ask for them, demand them. Remember, parents, teachers, and GEAR UP staff are available to help.

► Track your progress.

Once a week, or maybe once a month, think about your progress. Is it taking you longer than you thought to reach some goals? You might need to adjust your deadlines or add more in-between steps. Celebrate each success and think about what's next.

“ In
preparing for
battle,
I have always
found
that plans are useless,
but
planning is
indispensable.”

-Dwight D. Eisenhower



Step 5: Making It Happen

There's no way around it; to get into college you need to apply. Depending on your school of choice, this might mean taking tests, getting ready for an interview, or even writing an essay. High school students usually know all of this. But that doesn't answer the big questions...

What do colleges really want? How do colleges decide who gets in? What criteria do colleges use? For many, this is a big mystery. Well, not anymore. Making it happen takes the guesswork out of college admissions. Read on to learn more.

Admissions Policies

Community and technical colleges have open admissions policies. Anyone with a high school diploma can apply, enroll, and take classes.

To get into most four-year colleges you have to compete with other students. This is called competitive admissions. When you think about applying to college, usually competitive admissions schools come to mind.

Whether you choose a school with an open or competitive admissions policy, you will still have to meet high standards to get a degree.

What do colleges want to know?

Colleges want to know that you have the basic skills you'll need to be successful. At competitive schools (most four-year colleges), they'll try to figure that out by looking at your grades, test scores, and personal background. They also look at your activities and potential for success. Sometimes colleges are very specific about the grades and test scores students should have. Most colleges, however, don't have a fixed "cutoff" for grades, rank in class, or test scores. They want to know about your entire school record and personal history.

Two-year community and technical colleges (schools with open admissions) also want to make sure you've got the basic skills you need. They'll do that by making sure you have a high school diploma. Once you get into the college, you have to show you're ready for college-level classes. You do this by taking placement tests. These don't determine whether or not you get in, but tell the college which level of English, math, or world language you should take. If for some reason you're not ready for college-level classes in some of your subjects, you can still attend and take the classes you need to prepare.

What goes into an admissions or application packet?

Four-year schools usually want:

- › A completed application form
- › Application fee (fee waivers are available)
- › Official high school transcripts
- › ACT® or SAT® score reports
- › A personal statement or writing sample
- › Two or three letters of recommendation, and
- › Possibly an interview

Community and technical colleges usually ask for:

- › A completed application form, and
- › An application fee (fee waivers are available)

What happens to your application once you send it in?

At Washington's public four-year colleges and universities, your application will go through a couple of review steps.

Phase 1: Admissions Index

In phase 1, applications receive an Admissions Index (AI) score. This gives colleges a quick way to compare you to other students. Reviewers will also make sure you meet the school's minimum admissions index score requirements. For the University of Washington and Washington State University, the minimum score is 28. At The Evergreen State College, Western Washington University, Central Washington University, and Eastern Washington University, the minimum score is 13.

Washington's Admission Index gives students points based on their grade point average (GPA) and SAT I® or ACT® test scores. Grade point averages are calculated on a 4.0 scale and count three times as much as test scores. No extra points are given for honors, AP®, IB, or other college credit classes.

If you have a high admissions index score (usually above 70), and meet all other course requirements, you will probably get into your college of choice without more review. Applications with lower scores will move on to phase 2 of the process, freshman review.

The Admissions Index chart on the next page shows you what test scores and GPA you need to have the best chance of going to Washington's four-year public colleges. Don't be too upset if your AI score is not where you want it to be. This chart is just an estimate of your odds. Talk to your school counselor, GEAR UP staff, teachers, and others about the standards at your college of choice.

Finally, out-of-state and private colleges and universities may have a similar two-step process, but their standards for grades, test scores, and required high school classes may be different. Check with your school counselor or the admissions office at your school of choice for details.

Phase 2: Freshman Review

In phase 2, freshman review, admissions officers try to learn more about you. They want to know what you can offer the school, why you chose to apply, and whether you and the school are a good fit. Colleges might ask for a personal statement, interview, or letter of recommendation.

Admissions staff will consider everything including your grades, test scores, personal background, special talents, involvement in activities, and more. If you've earned decent grades, done ok on the SAT I® or ACT®, and been involved in activities, you'll have a good chance of getting in. If you haven't done those things, you might have a tougher time.

Now, don't freak out or anything. Colleges know that some students don't get good grades as freshmen or sophomores, and sometimes students don't do well on tests. Freshman review is your chance to talk about any problems you faced and how you handled things. Colleges want to see that you've turned (or are turning) things around.

Freshman Admissions Index for Washington's Public Four-year Colleges and Universities

▶ University of Washington
 ▶ Washington State University
 ▶ Western Washington University

▶ Central Washington University
 ▶ Eastern Washington University
 ▶ The Evergreen State College

Test Scores		High School Grade Point Average (GPA)*									
ACT®	SAT®	2.0	2.25	2.5	2.75	3.0	3.25	3.5	3.75	4.0	
13	600	0	0	1	12	22	33	44	55	66	
13	650	0	0	4	15	25	36	47	58	69	
14	700	0	0	7	18	28	39	50	61	72	
15	750	0	0	7	18	29	40	51	61	72	
16	800	0	0	9	20	31	41	52	63	74	
17	850	0	1	11	22	33	44	55	66	76	
18	900	0	3	13	24	35	46	57	67	78	
20	950	0	5	16	26	37	48	59	70	81	
21	1000	0	7	18	29	39	50	61	72	83	
22	1050	0	9	20	31	42	52	63	74	85	
24	1100	0	11	22	33	44	54	65	76	87	
25	1150	2	13	24	35	46	57	67	78	89	
26	1200	5	15	26	37	48	59	70	81	92	
28	1250	7	17	28	39	50	61	72	83	93	
29	1300	9	20	30	41	52	63	74	85	96	
30	1350	11	22	33	43	54	65	76	87	98	
31	1400	13	24	35	46	56	67	78	89	100	
32	1450	15	26	37	48	58	69	80	91	102	
33	1500	17	28	39	50	61	71	82	93	107	
34	1550	19	30	41	52	63	74	84	95	106	
36	1600	21	32	43	54	65	76	87	97	108	
Least competitive scores do not meet minimum standards at state colleges, may qualify for special or alternative admissions programs		Less competitive scores do not meet standards at some state colleges, may qualify for alternative admissions programs, subject to Freshmen Review		Competitive scores meet minimum standards at all state colleges, subject to Freshman Review		Very competitive scores are above minimum standards at all state colleges, subject to Freshman Review		Most competitive scores are well above standards at all state colleges, not generally subject to Freshman Review			

What You Should Know about the Admission Index

1. The Admissions Index is only a starting point. Most applications are subject to Freshman Review. That's where admissions staff read your materials more carefully. Then, you can really show what you offer the school.
2. The index calculation makes grades three times as important as test scores. It's better to get good grades in challenging classes than to stress out over test scores.
3. High index scores don't mean much if you haven't taken the required or recommended courses for your college of choice. Make sure you're taking the classes your college of choice requires.
4. Whatever your score on the Admissions Index, put lots of thought into your college applications. Admissions staff read and review everything you submit. Take each part of the admissions process seriously.
5. Finally, community colleges, technical colleges, and apprenticeship programs don't use the Admissions Index. Anyone with a high school diploma or GED can apply to participate in these schools and programs. If you need some time to improve your grades or show you're up to the college challenge, consider a community or technical college. You can earn a two-year associate's degree and transfer to a four-year college later on.

Find the row with your ACT or SAT score on the left side. Follow it across until you reach the column with your approximate GPA at the top. The point where your test score and GPA intersect is your Admissions Index.

*GPA's are calculated on an unweighted 4.0 scale. (That means no bonus points for honors, IB, or AP classes)

Criteria Colleges May Use in Freshman Review

1. Are you taking more academic classes than you are required to take?
2. Are your senior year courses challenging?
3. Are you taking (or planning to take) honors, Advanced Placement (AP®), or International Baccalaureate (IB) classes?
4. Are you taking (or planning to take) college classes while you're still in high school, including Running Start or Tech Prep?
5. Have your grades and test scores improved over time?
6. Have you received any academic awards?
7. Does your high school have an unusually tough grading system?
8. Do you often participate in school or community activities? Do you play an active or leadership role?
9. Have you overcome a disability or other hardship? Do you bring diversity or a multicultural awareness?
10. Do you have a special athletic or artistic talent?

“Success
is to be measured
not so much by the
position
that one has reached
in life
as by
the obstacles
which he
has overcome
while trying to
Succeed.”

-Booker T. Washington

Writing a Personal Statement

The personal statement is an important part of most college applications. It's your opportunity to show the admissions committee that you have personality, opinions, and experiences to share. It also demonstrates that you can write at the college level. Here are some tips on writing a great personal statement.

► Be yourself.

Don't tell people what you think they want to hear. If you're serious, write a serious essay. If you're funny, try to express your sense of humor while getting a serious message across. Be honest and true to yourself. Colleges want to know what makes you unique.

► Start on the right foot.

Take time to write a great opening paragraph. This makes the reader want to keep reading. Some people even write the opening paragraph last, when they know what they want to say. Just don't get too carried away. Your essay should be brief.

► Talk about issues or problems.

Your essay could be a discussion of some issue or problem that interests you. Just make sure you choose an issue people relate to or find interesting. This is also your chance to explain any challenges you faced in school or out.

► Write, revise, and revise again.

Don't try to write your personal statement at the last minute. You could end up with careless typos or spelling errors. Get someone you trust like a teacher, counselor, parent, or friend to read your essay and provide feedback. Then, put your essay aside for a while and come back to it later with a fresh perspective.



“Speak
up for
Yourself,
or you'll end up
a rug.”

-Mae West

Requesting Letters of Recommendation

If you plan to apply to a four-year college or university, you will probably need letters of recommendation. You can get letters from teachers, coaches, counselors, family friends, or any other adult who knows you well. Start thinking now about people you could ask. Give yourself some time to make a good impression. Listed below are some other things you can do.

It's in your best interest to give people a good impression of you. But, don't assume that a few days of good behavior can make up for years of goofing off. These tips won't make people forget the bad stuff. The goal is to help them remember the good.

► Be an active participant in class.

It helps you learn and shows your teachers that you care about course subjects.

► Take advantage of teacher study hours.

If your teacher offers a review session before or after class, go to it! Again, it shows your teacher that you care about learning and go out of your way to do your best. Regardless of the grade you get, your teacher will still have a good impression of you.

► Stop by to visit old teachers, coaches, etc.

Whether it's your ninth grade counselor or your junior varsity coach, stop in to visit, talk, and remember old times. This gives you a chance to refresh their memories of your work ethic and personality.

► Request letters at least one month in advance.

Adults are busy people and they may get lots of recommendation requests. If you get your request in early and beat the rush, you won't be panicked waiting for your letter to be finished. This also shows that you know it will take time and planning to write a good letter. Most people appreciate the extra notice.

► Show up to work on time.

Be the best worker you can be and give each customer a smile. Your boss will notice the extra effort and initiative. You might also try volunteering for extra responsibilities.

► Get to know your boss and coworkers.

In order for someone to write you a convincing letter of recommendation, they have to feel they know you well. Talk to people you want to recommend you, and let them get to know the real you.

► Give people what they need.

Prepare a resume with your special achievements and give it to your recommender. That way, your letter is specifically tailored for you. Don't assume adults will remember all that you've done. If there's some special project or class you want them to mention, write a note suggesting they include it in your letter.

Finance Your Future

If you want to go to college and get a higher education, you can do it. Money does not have to be an obstacle.

First, college may not be as expensive as you think, and there are many ways to reduce the costs.

Second, scholarships are available for students. You don't have to be the smartest, fastest, or most talented student, either. Scholarships are awarded for all sorts of reasons.

Third, financial aid is available to help students and families pay for college. Don't assume that you are or are not eligible for financial aid. The only way to know if you can get financial aid is to apply.

College Costs

When people talk about the cost of college, they generally include tuition, mandatory fees, room, board (food), books, transportation, and other supplies. You may be able to control some of these costs, like how much you pay for housing and food. Some of the costs are out of your control, like how much tuition goes up every year.

You should also know that community and technical colleges typically cost less than four-year colleges and universities. And, four-year state colleges and universities usually cost less than four-year private colleges and universities. Look at the chart below.

Estimated College Costs in Washington 2002-2003

	Two-year community and technical colleges	Four-year public regional colleges and universities*	Four-year public research colleges and universities [◇]	Four-year private colleges and universities**
Tuition and Mandatory Fees	\$1,900/year	\$3,400/year	\$4,500/year	\$18,750/year
Living costs (transportation, housing, food, books, and supplies) ▼	\$9,800/year	\$9,800/year	\$9,800/year	\$9,800/year
TOTAL	\$11,700/year	\$13,200/year	\$14,800/year	\$28,550/year

* Eastern, Western, and Central Washington University, and The Evergreen State College

◇ University of Washington and Washington State University

** SOURCE: Washington Financial Aid Association

▼ Estimates for traditional undergraduate students living away from home.

Paying for College

There are many ways to cover the costs of college, such as saving, finding scholarships, and applying for financial aid. Let's look at these options one at a time and explain how they work.

Saving Money for College

Every penny you save can reduce the amount you need to borrow for college. And, the earlier you start saving, the less you will need to save every month to meet your savings goals. In time, small amounts set aside every month can grow into serious money.

To get an idea of how your money can grow and how you can save, talk with a qualified investment advisor or representative at your local credit union or bank. They can tell you about saving for college using:

- ▶ Savings accounts
- ▶ Federal savings bonds
- ▶ Stocks and mutual fund accounts
- ▶ College savings plans and more

You and your family can also participate in Washington's pre-paid college tuition program. Guaranteed Education Tuition or GET allows Washington students and families to buy tomorrow's tuition today. Anyone—parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and friends—can purchase tuition units for you to use at colleges and universities nationwide. To learn more, call toll-free, (877) GET-TUIT or visit the GET Web site, www.get.wa.gov.

Saving Money in College

The college costs you see in this book are only estimates. Even if you are unable to save money before you go to college, you can save money in college by spending less. There are many ways to lower your college costs. Here are some examples:

- ▶ **Save on tuition.**
Earn college credits while you're in high school. Go to a less expensive community and technical college before going to a four-year school. Or choose a less expensive four-year college.
- ▶ **Save money on housing and food.**
Live at home or with relatives while you're in college.
- ▶ **Save on transportation.**
Go to a college nearby or take the bus to and from the campus. Avoid buying a car.
- ▶ **Save on books.**
Go to the bookstore a couple weeks before classes start to buy used textbooks. You can also talk to older students in your major. They may have old textbooks you can borrow.

Financial Aid

When you and your family have done all you can to cover the cost of college, financial aid is available to help. Most financial aid comes from state and federal governments, colleges, and universities. The rest comes from private sources, such as local organizations, foundations, and corporations.

Financial aid is divided into two categories: need-based and merit-based aid. Need-based financial aid is awarded to students who have a documented financial need. This includes loans, grants, and work study. Merit-based aid is awarded for high performance, good grades, or special attributes. Scholarships are considered merit-based financial aid.

Colleges usually combine or "package" different types of aid to meet your financial need. The award package you receive will depend on your family's financial situation, the amount of aid available at the college, and the college's cost of attendance.

Need-Based Aid

Loans	Money for college that must be repaid after you leave college.
Grants	Money for college from the federal government, state government, or the college you plan to attend that you do not need to repay.
Work Study	Money for college that you earn in a part-time job while you are in college. Colleges may arrange these jobs for you.

Merit-Based Aid

Scholarships	Money for college that is often given for high academic achievement, talent, or athletic ability. Scholarships do not need to be repaid.
---------------------	--

Determining Your Expected Family Contribution

Colleges and universities use the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to determine how much you and your family can afford to pay for college. You must complete the FAFSA to be considered for most federal and state financial aid programs.

The FAFSA asks you and your parents about household income, assets, stocks, bonds, savings, and more. It also takes into account the size of your family and the number of college students in your family. The FAFSA form is not very hard to complete, but many factors are considered in the final calculation. The only way to determine your eligibility is to apply.

FAFSA forms are available at high schools and colleges in late December or early January. Juniors should pick one up and review it with a parent or guardian. Seniors should prepare to complete the form as soon as possible after January 1. Some colleges may require additional financial aid forms. Check with the financial aid office at your school of choice to learn more.

If you have questions about the FAFSA, call toll-free 1-800-4-FEDAID (1-800-433-3243) between 5 a.m. and 5 p.m. PST or check with the financial aid office at the college you plan to attend.

Determining Financial Need

Financial need is the difference between what your family is expected to pay (expected family contribution or EFC) and what it costs to go to your college of choice (cost of attendance). Most colleges will try to meet 100 percent of your financial need, but your need may vary from school to school.

Cost of Attendance

$$\begin{aligned} & - \text{Expected Family Contribution} \\ & = \text{Determined Financial Need} \end{aligned}$$

Regardless of the school you choose to attend, your expected family contribution, or the amount of money your family is expected to pay, won't change very much. Each college will use the same information to decide how much your family should contribute. Just because a school costs more, doesn't mean you and your family will have to pay more. Here's how it works.



Example 1

College A costs \$10,000 per year. After filling out the FAFSA, you learn that your expected family contribution is \$2,000.

$$\begin{aligned} & \$10,000 \text{ Total Cost of Attendance} \\ & - \$ 2,000 \text{ Expected Family Contribution} \\ & = \$ 8,000 \text{ Your Financial Need} \end{aligned}$$

This college's financial aid offer could include:

Student loans	\$2,625
Combined grants	\$2,875
Work study	+\$2,500
Total	\$8,000

Example 2

College B costs \$18,000 per year and your expected family contribution is still \$2,000. Remember, \$2,000 is the amount you and your family will have to contribute during the school year.

$$\begin{aligned} & \$18,000 \text{ Total Cost of Attendance} \\ & - \$ 2,000 \text{ Expected Family Contribution} \\ & = \$16,000 \text{ Your Financial Need} \end{aligned}$$

This college's financial aid offer could include:

Student loans	\$4,625
Combined grants	\$8,875
Work study	+\$2,500
Total	\$16,000

In either example, you could meet your expected family contribution in many ways. You or your parents could use savings, apply for a loan, or make monthly payments to the university. You could even get a summer job and save the money before school starts. And, if your family's financial situation changes after you complete the FAFSA, you can contact the college to explain your situation. The college may be able to reduce your family contribution and increase your financial aid award.

Washington Financial Aid Programs

Remember, there are four main types of financial aid: scholarships, loans, grants, and work study. Within those categories, there are a lot of different programs and services. Just think how many different scholarships are available! There aren't quite that many loan or grant programs, but there are quite a few.

The state of Washington spends about \$120 million each year to help students and their families pay for college. You may be eligible for one or more of the following state financial aid programs.

► State Need Grant

Undergraduate resident students with significant financial need may be eligible for this grant.

► Educational Opportunity Grant

Undergraduate students with junior standing may be eligible for grants. Students must have demonstrated financial need and be unable to complete their education without this grant due to family or work commitments, health concerns, financial need, or other similar factors.

► State Work Study

Undergraduate and graduate students with financial need earn money for college through part-time work while gaining experience. Whenever possible, jobs are related to your academic and career interests.

► Washington Promise Scholarship

Top high school students from low- and middle-income families may be eligible for scholarships. Students must meet income requirements and:

- Rank in the top 15 percent of their classes, or
- Score 1,200 or higher on the SAT I® on the first attempt, or
- Score 27 or higher on the ACT® on the first attempt.

► Washington Scholars

Three high school students from each of the 49 state legislative districts are selected to receive scholarships for outstanding academic achievement, leadership, and community service.

► Washington Award for Vocational Excellence (WAVE)

High school and community/technical college students receive scholarships for outstanding achievement in vocational or technical education.

► American Indian Endowed Scholarship

Low-income undergraduate and graduate students with close social and cultural ties to a Native American community may be eligible for scholarships.

► Health Professional Loan Repayment and Scholarship

Nursing, medical, or other healthcare students agree to work for three to five years in medically underserved areas or in areas with a shortage of health care providers. In exchange, they receive either a scholarship or help repaying student loans.

For more information about Washington financial aid programs, contact:

Washington Higher Education Coordinating Board
917 Lakeridge Way
PO Box 43430
Olympia, WA 98504-3430
Phone: (360) 753-7850
Email: finaid@hecb.wa.gov

For more information about federal aid programs, contact:

U.S. Department of Education
Federal Student Aid Information Center
www.ed.gov/studentaid
Phone: 1-800-433-3243
(TTY: 1-800-730-8913)

For more information about federal tax benefits, contact:

U.S. Internal Revenue Service
www.irs.ustreas.gov
Phone: 1-800-829-3676

► Robert C. Byrd Honors Scholarship

Washington high school seniors who demonstrate outstanding academic achievement and show promise of continued academic excellence are chosen to apply for scholarships.

► Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) Student Exchange

Washington residents can enroll in eligible undergraduate and graduate programs in 14 western states at reduced tuition rates.

Federal Aid Programs & Services

The federal government offers a variety of programs and benefits to help students go to college. You must apply for financial aid using the FAFSA form to receive aid from any of the following programs.

► Pell Grant

Undergraduate students who have significant financial need and have not earned a bachelor's or professional degree may be eligible for this grant.

► Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant

Undergraduate students who have significant financial need and have not earned a bachelor's or professional degree may be eligible for this grant.

► Federal Work Study

Undergraduate and graduate students can earn money to pay for education expenses through part-time work.

► Perkins Loan

Students with significant financial need may be eligible for these low-interest loans.

► Subsidized Stafford Loan

Students may apply for the subsidized Stafford loan, which is based on financial need.

► Unsubsidized Stafford Loan

Students may apply for the unsubsidized Stafford loan, which is not based on financial need.

► Parent Loan for Undergraduate Students (PLUS)

Parents of dependent undergraduate students may apply for a PLUS loan, which is not based on financial need.

Federal Tax Benefits

You do not need to file the FAFSA or get federal financial aid to benefit from these federal tax credits and deductions. These might make college more affordable for you. Talk about these benefits with your parent(s) or guardian. Income limits and other restrictions may apply. Consult a tax professional for details.

► Hope Scholarship Tax Credit

Students or their parents may claim up to \$1,500 per year, per qualified family member, for tuition expenses. This credit only covers the first two years of undergraduate study.

► Lifetime Learning Tax Credit

In 2002, students or their parents may claim 20 percent of tuition expenses up to \$1,000 per year, per family. In 2003 and beyond, students or their parents may claim 20 percent of tuition expenses up to \$2,000 per year, per family. This credit covers all continuing education programs and college study after the first two years.

► State Prepaid Tuition and College Savings Plans (529 Plans)

Parents, relatives, or friends can invest after-tax money in a state tuition program for a future student. Money invested grows tax-free as long as it is spent on the student's higher education.

► Education Savings Accounts (Education IRAs)

Parents, relatives, or friends can make annual, nondeductible contributions to education savings accounts. Earnings grow tax-free, and the money is tax-free when withdrawn as long as it is spent on the student's education.

► Student Loan Interest Deduction

Student borrowers or their families can deduct student loan interest payments from their taxable income.

► Penalty-free IRA Withdrawals

People under the age of 59½ may withdraw money from a regular or Roth IRA for tuition and expenses without paying the 10 percent early withdrawal penalty.

► Employer-provided Educational Assistance

Employers can provide each worker up to \$5,250 per year in tax-free educational benefits.

► New Deduction for Higher Education Expenses

Beginning in 2002, individuals can deduct up to \$3,000 in education tuition and expenses even if they do not itemize deductions.

How to Apply for Financial Aid

1. Complete the FAFSA.

To apply for federal financial aid and some state aid programs, you must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The FAFSA is available at high school guidance offices, college financial aid offices, and public libraries or by calling 1-800-4FEDAID. It is also available online at www.fafsa.ed.gov. Seniors should apply as soon as possible AFTER January 1. Do not wait until you get into college to apply.

2. Review your Student Aid Report.

One to four weeks after you submit your FAFSA, you will receive a Student Aid Report (SAR). The report will include your Expected Family Contribution, or the amount you and your family are expected to pay for college. Review it carefully and make corrections, if needed.

3. Contact prospective schools.

Contact the financial aid offices of prospective schools as soon as possible about application rules and deadlines. Remember, some schools have additional financial aid forms you will need to complete. Also, ask about other financial aid opportunities, including tuition waivers and scholarships.

4. Follow instructions and meet all deadlines.

Check financial aid priority deadlines at selected colleges and universities in Washington. The Washington Financial Aid Association Web site has this information www.wfaa.org. If your FAFSA or other financial aid applications are late or incomplete, you may not receive all of the aid you are eligible for. Financial aid is given to eligible students on a first come, first served basis, and schools can run out of some types of aid.

5. Evaluate financial aid award letters.

Schools will send you award letters with details of your financial aid package - usually a combination of grants, loans, and work study programs. Compare the financial aid awards carefully. You may be required to either accept or decline your award by a specific date. Do not miss this reply deadline or you could lose your financial aid award.

6. Keep good records.

Make photocopies of your applications and supporting information. Quickly respond to requests for more information. You may want to keep a financial aid folder to compare awards and keep track of forms.

For more information about financial aid and scholarships, visit:

The Smart Guide to Financial Aid www.finaid.org
The Free Application for Federal Student Aid Online www.fafsa.ed.gov
Washington Financial Aid Association www.wfaa.org
FastWeb Scholarship Search www.fastweb.com
Wired Scholar Scholarship Search www.wiredscholar.com
Free Scholarship Search Service www.scholarships.com

“If you think
education is .
expensive,
try ignorance.”

-Derek Bok

Finding Scholarships

Scholarships are awarded for academic excellence, community service, athletic or artistic talent, even writing and poetry. Whatever your special gifts, there is probably a scholarship to match. Scholarships do not have to be repaid, but you do have to apply for them. Each scholarship usually requires a separate application. It's never too early or too late to look for scholarships. Here are some tips to get you started.

1. **Check with your school guidance counselor.**
Many groups send scholarship notices to high schools.
2. **Pay attention to school announcements.**
High schools often announce scholarship opportunities over the loudspeaker or in homeroom classes.
3. **Read everything you receive from your college of choice.**
Colleges usually include information about university scholarships with admissions applications and advertising brochures.
4. **Visit free scholarship search sites on the Internet.**
Many sites allow you to register your ethnic, academic, and interest information and receive regular updates on scholarships that might work for you.
5. **Go to your local library.**
Many libraries have copies of the *College Blue Book*. This series of books lists thousands of scholarships.
6. **Ask your parent or guardian to check with his/her human resources department or benefits specialist.**
Many companies offer scholarships to the children of current and/or former employees.
7. **Contact organizations you or your parents belong to.**
Many organizations offer scholarships to children or members.
8. **Consider community or military service.**
The government offers many programs for students who want to earn money for college and serve their country.
9. **Avoid scholarship scams.**
Beware of any service that wants you to pay for a scholarship search. Most scholarships are listed online or in your local library for free.



Toolbox Additions

Until now, the information you've read in this handbook has been straightforward. It's kind of a cookie-cutter approach to getting ready for college. That's mostly because all teens need a strong foundation of core courses to do well in life. But sometimes there are snags or challenges that require more information and more effort.

You might have trouble with your study habits. You might have a child to care for, learning or physical disability, or even a special athletic talent. These challenges and concerns deserve attention, too. Students facing some of these issues will find lots of good information here.

In this section, you'll also find worksheets and activities to help you think through different college and career planning steps.

Remember, the older you get, the more responsibility you have for the direction your life takes. If you want to accomplish something, plan for it. If you need help, get it. Teachers, school officials, parents, guardians, and friends are available to help you reach your goals. But some things will be up to you.

10 Study Tips

- ▶ Decide what to study, how long to study, or how much to study before you get started. Set a goal and stick to your deadlines.
- ▶ If you're a motivated student, complete difficult tasks first. For procrastinators, start off with the easy, interesting parts of the project. Reward yourself as you accomplish tasks.
- ▶ Have special places to study. Take into consideration lighting, temperature, and the location of a desk, pen, paper, etc.
- ▶ Study 30-50 minutes then take a 10-minute break. Stretch, relax, and have a snack.
- ▶ Allow plenty of time for reading, outlining, and writing papers. Use less time for memorization, review, and self-testing.
- ▶ If you get tired or bored, move to a different location, subject, or task.
- ▶ Use memory activities to review just before you fall asleep.
- ▶ Study with a friend. Quiz each other, compare notes, and predict test questions.
- ▶ Read all assignment and test instructions carefully.
- ▶ Speak up! If you need help, ask for it.



Solutions To Common Studying Problems

The best way to make sure you get good grades is to start the year practicing good study habits and stick with them all year long. It's a lot easier to maintain good grades than to improve poor grades later on.

Some of the most common studying challenges are listed on the next page along with tips to overcome them. Maybe some of these tips will help you get more from your schoolwork.

1. Balancing school and friends...

This can be a challenge. Friendships are important, but so is school. The best way to balance school and friends is to study together. That way, you can visit, play, and accomplish your school goals, too. Good friends will support you with your academic and future goals. As a last resort, you can make friends with kids who are as interested in schoolwork as you are, or spend less time with unsupportive friends.

2. Add interest to your reading assignments...

To get through a long reading assignment, imagine yourself in the story. Get involved. Ask yourself, "What is important to remember about this section?" Take notes or underline key sections and discuss the material with others in your class. You could also create a study group to break the assignment into sections. Each person could be responsible for closely studying one part of the text. The other parts you could skim or outline. Then, get together as a group to share what you learned and study for tests.

3. Cramming before a test...

Cramming before a test is a bad idea. Start studying well in advance, and keep studying as you go along in the school year. Begin with an hour or two a day, and then increase your study time as exams approach.

4. Don't know where to start...

Your challenge is to prioritize. With a big project, list all the things you have to do. Then, split the project into small, manageable chunks. Ask, "Which part is due first? Which part of the assignment is worth more points? Which task will take the most time to complete?" Decide which tasks are most important and what order you'll use to get things done. Then, get started! The most important thing to remember is start early and do a little bit each day. You'll be amazed at how much progress you make.

5. Staying up all night to study...

Before a test, it is important to have a rested mind. You should relax and unwind, mentally and physically, before each test. Eat well, sleep well, and maybe get some exercise. These help you stay relaxed and do better on the test.

6. Not enough time to study...

The trick to solving this problem is getting organized. Bring out all of your notes and textbooks. Identify the most important information and the things you don't understand. Focus your study time and energy on learning those things. If you need extra help, ask a teacher or tutor. If after school activities are the problem, keep a calendar with game days, meetings, assignments, and practices listed. Start assignments right when you get them and use lunch hours and breaks to make extra progress.

7. Trouble remembering things...

If you only have trouble sometimes, try connecting new information with your own examples and experiences. Use rhymes, poems, or mental pictures to help remember important facts. Some people even make up songs to help them remember. If you always have trouble remembering, no matter how long or hard you study, talk to your school counselor. Your counselor can talk with you about your specific problems and recommend strategies to help.

Disability Accommodations

Colleges and universities are required to provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. But, it's your responsibility to make sure the campus knows about your needs before you get there. Don't assume that every college has adequate facilities and resources. If you face learning and/or physical challenges, talk with your college of choice, school counselor, or GEAR UP staff to make sure the college is ready, willing, and able to meet your needs.

When you research colleges, check into student services programs. Colleges offer a wide range of assistance, from Braille texts and books on tape to complicated technologies for quadriplegic students. If you have severe Dyslexia or other learning disabilities, you can sometimes get extra time to complete exams, too.

Students with learning and/or physical challenges may also be able to receive extra time on exams like ACT® and SAT® or compete for special scholarships.

The Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) has a list of links on its Web site, www.ahead.org, with information about disability issues, including links to college centers for students with disabilities.

Student Parents

If you're a teen parent, you also face some unique challenges. You might want to go away to college, but you worry about leaving home and family, finding housing, childcare, and work. Or, you might want to stay close to home and wonder what services are available for you.

Talk to the admissions office at your college of choice before you decide to apply or not to apply. Find out what the school has to offer. Colleges are interested in having a diverse student body. They will do their best to meet your needs.

- Most four-year colleges and universities offer family housing units for married students or students with children. These apartments are usually less expensive than housing near the college. Some schools even offer rental furniture for family apartments.

If you are interested in living away from home, contact the housing office at your college of choice. Ask for apartment floor plans and rent information. If you take a tour of the campus, ask your tour guide about family housing options. Your tour guide may be able to tell you where the units are (they probably won't be part of the tour). Later, you can visit the area on your own or with a family member or friend. Also, ask about waiting lists, waiting times, and assignment priorities. Family housing units can be limited. Single parents with financial need may have the first priority.

- Transportation assistance may also be available. Some colleges and universities operate shuttles to and from family housing units. Others offer reduced-price bus passes through the student activities or student services office.
- Many colleges and universities offer reduced-price childcare services to students. The hours of operation may be more flexible than you think, offering daytime and evening care. Check with admissions representatives and student services offices for more information.

Student Athletes

The thought of playing college sports can be intimidating and exciting. A college recruiter can offer all sorts of promises and perks to get you to come to a particular school. Big-time NCAA Division I sports like football, basketball, and baseball aren't all colleges have to offer. Many students will be recruited for soccer, softball, hockey, cheerleading, gymnastics, and even golf. If you plan to play an NCAA sport, here are some things to keep in mind.



► Ask lots of questions.

Coaches and recruiters should be open to all of your questions. No question is too big or too small. Talk to current and former athletes, too. See how they feel about their experiences at the school, in the community, and on the team. Sometimes the coach and the athletic program are great, but the social scene is not so great.

► Don't rush yourself.

If there are lots of colleges that want you, take your time. You do not need to declare your school of choice right away (although colleges like it when you declare a choice early). Give yourself time to visit your top schools, take notes, and compare your options.

► Watch for dishonest recruitment practices.

If a program is willing to break or bend the rules to recruit you, it might be more likely to break promises to its student athletes or other NCAA rules. If your college ends up on NCAA probation while you're a student athlete, you could miss out on the chance to participate in the post-season or gain national exposure. Character does count.

► Meet all NCAA eligibility rules.

Before colleges can even recruit you, you must register with the NCAA's Initial Eligibility Clearinghouse. To register you have to meet minimum GPA and SAT I® or ACT® standards and pass at least 13 core high school courses. Remember, you cannot play or practice in Division I or II unless you meet these requirements. Visit the NCAA's Web site, www.ncaa.org/eligibility/cbsa for more information.

► Have a backup plan.

Most high school athletes will not receive college scholarships. Of those who do, most will not go on to play in professional leagues. Make sure that you are strong academically as well as athletically. That way, you will still be able to go to college and reach your dreams whether you get a scholarship or not.

Worksheet: Self-Discovery

Use the following questions to think about who you are and what you want for your future. Refer to pages six and seven for more information. Talk to a guidance counselor or GEAR UP staff member about how this worksheet can help you explore your options and prepare for the future.

<p><u>Interests</u></p> <p>What subjects, activities, or things interest you?</p>	
<p><u>Abilities</u></p> <p>What can you do well?</p>	
<p><u>Values & Priorities</u></p> <p>What do you value in life? What is most important to you?</p>	
<p><u>Money Matters</u></p> <p>What kind of lifestyle do you want? How much will it cost to live that lifestyle?</p>	
<p><u>Physical Factors</u></p> <p>Do you want a job that challenges you physically? Are there any physical things that you need help with?</p>	
<p><u>Academic Goals</u></p> <p>What are your academic goals? What kind of degree do you want? How long are you willing to stay in school?</p>	

Worksheet: Researching Careers

Use a pencil to fill in the worksheet with information about the careers that interest you. Refer to pages 8-13 for useful Web sites and resources. Or, visit with your school counselor, GEAR UP staff, parents, and friends to talk about these questions.

Don't forget, your ideas and career interests may change over time. So, review this information often and make changes as needed.

	CAREER CLUSTER/JOB #1	CAREER CLUSTER/JOB #2	CAREER CLUSTER/JOB #3	CAREER CLUSTER/JOB #4
What is the career cluster or job?				
What do I like about it?				
What do I dislike about it?				
Does this match my interests, values, needs, and goals? Which ones?				
What kind of higher education does this career or job require?				
What type of college offers this program?				
Which local college(s) offers this program?				
Which out-of-area colleges offer this program?				
Which high school subjects do I need to study to prepare?				
How much money could I make?				
What is the employment outlook?				

Worksheet: High School Planner

Use the courses here (or your school's course catalog) to fill in your four-year course plan. There's a sample plan on page 25 to help you out. Check off each core course you take, and record your grades, activities, and goals in the spaces provided.

Remember, every school offers different classes and has different requirements. So make sure you ask your school or GEAR UP counselor to look over your plans and help you choose your classes.

If you have questions about the specific classes that your school offers, visit the Higher Education Coordinating Board Web site, www.hecb.wa.gov, and click on "College/Career Preparation." There, in the Core Course Database, you can type in your school's name and find the classes that meet each requirement.

Suggestions for using this planner:

1. Meet with your guidance counselor or GEAR UP staff at least once a year to discuss your plans. Every school offers different classes, and many districts have different graduation requirements. Requirements can also change. Get up-to-date information from your school counselor so you can stay on track.
2. If you have a hard time keeping track of papers, ask your school counselor to put your course plan in your student file or portfolio. This gives you a reason to visit your counselor more often. It also helps your counselor learn more about you and your progress. Later, when you ask for letters of recommendation, your counselor will have a reminder of your activities.
3. When you register for classes, take your course plan with you. Check off each of the classes you've taken and consider those you still need to take. This way you can ensure you're on track to graduate from high school and go on to college or work.
4. Review your plans on your own at least twice per year. Take time to record your most recent grades, activities, and awards.

Take these classes to graduate high school:

ENGLISH 3 years

English 9, 10, 11, or 12
Creative Writing
Composition
Literature

MATHEMATICS 2 years

Algebra I and II
Geometry
Trigonometry
Integrated Math I, II, & III
Pre-Calculus
Calculus

SCIENCE 2 years (one must be a (*) class)

Astronomy	Integrated Science
Biology*	Oceanography
Chemistry*	Physical Science
Earth Science	Physics*
Environmental Studies	Principles of Technology*
Geology	

SOCIAL STUDIES 2.5 years (including Washington State History)

Economics
European History
Government and Politics
Native Cultures
U.S. History
World Studies

FINE, VISUAL, PERFORMING ARTS-OR- ACADEMIC ELECTIVE 1 year

Band	—OR—	Choose an extra class in
Orchestra		Language Arts
Choir		Mathematics
Drawing		Science
Photography		World Language
Drama, etc.		Social Studies

WORK-RELATED EDUCATION..... 1 year

Accounting
Business Law
Communication Technologies
Desktop Publishing
Family and Consumer Sciences
Internship or Job Co-op
Keyboarding
Material Science
Record Keeping
Voc-Tech or Industrial Arts

ELECTIVES 5.5 years

Choose extra courses in any subject

HEALTH and PHYSICAL EDUCATION 2 years

Health
P.E.
Sports

EXTRA REQUIREMENTS FOR YOUR SCHOOL: _____

Add these courses to get into Washington's public four-year colleges and universities:

WORLD LANGUAGE 2 years (must be same language)

Latin	Russian
French	Mandarin (Chinese)
Spanish	Japanese
German	Other world language

ENGLISH 1 extra year MATHEMATICS 1 extra year SOCIAL STUDIES 1/2 extra year

GOALS	Student Name:				Parent/Sponsor Name:			
	9th Grade School Counselor:				10th Grade School Counselor:			
CHECKLIST AND TIMELINE	9th Grade GEAR UP Staff Name:				10th Grade GEAR UP Staff Name:			
	Goal(s) for 9th Grade:				Goal(s) for 10th Grade:			
1ST SEMESTER GRADES	GRADE 9 <input type="checkbox"/> Create a high school plan <input type="checkbox"/> Take the most challenging classes you can handle <input type="checkbox"/> Focus on learning (Your grades will be a permanent part of your transcripts; colleges will see them) <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare for WASL tests <input type="checkbox"/> Improve or continue good study habits <input type="checkbox"/> Get involved in activities				GRADE 10 <input type="checkbox"/> Create or review your high school plans <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss types of colleges with parents, teachers, and friends <input type="checkbox"/> Keep your options open—take the most challenging classes you can handle <input type="checkbox"/> Ask your school counselor about AP®, Running Start, Tech Prep, or IB classes <input type="checkbox"/> Take the Running Start entrance test, if you're interested <input type="checkbox"/> In the fall, take PLAN® test for practice. These tests are usually offered in October. <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare for WASL tests			
	<input type="checkbox"/> Take an interest inventory <input type="checkbox"/> Research career possibilities <input type="checkbox"/> Research college possibilities <input type="checkbox"/> If you haven't already, start saving money for college				<input type="checkbox"/> If interested in the military, take the ASVAB test. <input type="checkbox"/> Continue to focus on learning. Colleges will see your grades <input type="checkbox"/> Go to a college or financial aid night at school <input type="checkbox"/> Research colleges. Check libraries, counseling offices, and Web sites <input type="checkbox"/> Take part in after-school activities or clubs <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare for the PSAT®, ACT®, and/or SAT® <input type="checkbox"/> Search for scholarships <input type="checkbox"/> Consider a part-time job, internship, or volunteer position <input type="checkbox"/> Research college majors			
2ND SEMESTER GRADES	1ST QUARTER		2ND QUARTER		1ST QUARTER		2ND QUARTER	
	CLASS	GRADE	CLASS	GRADE	CLASS	GRADE	CLASS	GRADE
TEST SCORES	TERM GPA		TERM GPA		TERM GPA		TERM GPA	
	3RD QUARTER		4TH QUARTER		3RD QUARTER		4TH QUARTER	
CLASS		GRADE		CLASS		GRADE		
TERM GPA		TERM GPA		TERM GPA		TERM GPA		
ASVAB		PSAT®		PLAN®		ACTIVITIES & AWARDS		
V		M						

Grade 11

GOALS	Student Name:				School Counselor:					
	Parent/Sponsor Name:				GEAR UP Staff Name:					
Goal(s) for the Year:										
CHECKLIST AND TIMELINE	SEPTEMBER - NOVEMBER		DECEMBER - FEBRUARY		MARCH - MAY		JUNE - AUGUST			
	<input type="checkbox"/> Meet with your school counselor <input type="checkbox"/> Decide what you want in a college <input type="checkbox"/> Choose 5-10 colleges that meet your needs and request information from them <input type="checkbox"/> Find out how your grades, tests scores, etc. compare with the typical applicant at your college(s) of choice <input type="checkbox"/> Continue to take challenging courses. If possible, add AP®, IB, Running Start or Tech Prep classes <input type="checkbox"/> Stay involved in activities. Take on a leadership role <input type="checkbox"/> Take the PSAT® (October) <input type="checkbox"/> Go to college and financial aid fairs <input type="checkbox"/> If you're interested in the military, register for the ASVAB test. See your recruiter or school counselor for more information		<input type="checkbox"/> Sign-up to take the SAT® and/or ACT® in May or June. See your school counselor or GEAR UP staff for details <input type="checkbox"/> Begin to prepare for SAT® and/or ACT® <input type="checkbox"/> Read all information you receive from your preferred colleges <input type="checkbox"/> Listen to school announcements and check the guidance office for spring open-houses and college tours <input type="checkbox"/> Check deadlines. Get familiar with the application and financial aid deadlines at your top choice schools <input type="checkbox"/> Look for and apply for scholarships <input type="checkbox"/> If interested in the service academies, (example: West Point) meet with your counselor to start the application process <input type="checkbox"/> Consider possible college majors		<input type="checkbox"/> Sign-up for college campus visits and tours. If possible, bring family along <input type="checkbox"/> Work on your resume. Visit your counselor or GEAR UP staff for help <input type="checkbox"/> If you haven't already, plan your senior year courses <input type="checkbox"/> Apply for summer jobs or internships, or look for volunteer opportunities <input type="checkbox"/> Narrow your list of colleges to 5 <input type="checkbox"/> Choose adults you want to write you a letter of recommendation (think about church or community leaders, teachers, coaches etc.) <input type="checkbox"/> Consider applying to college under Early Decision or Early Action programs <input type="checkbox"/> Sign up to take June SAT® or ACT® tests. Also consider registering for June SAT II® subject tests		<input type="checkbox"/> Request applications from your college(s) of choice <input type="checkbox"/> Work on your personal statement (many applications require a short essay about yourself) <input type="checkbox"/> Visit college campuses <input type="checkbox"/> If you intend to play NCAA sports, register for Initial Eligibility. You cannot play, practice, or be recruited until you are certified by the NCAA's Initial Eligibility Clearinghouse www.ncaa.org/eligibility/cbsa <input type="checkbox"/> If possible, save money for college <input type="checkbox"/> If you're applying early decision, request high school transcript(s) and letters of recommendation from teachers etc. Send them in with your application			
	1ST QUARTER		2ND QUARTER		3RD QUARTER		4TH QUARTER			
	CLASS	GRADE	CLASS	GRADE	CLASS	GRADE	CLASS	GRADE		
	TERM GPA		TERM GPA		TERM GPA		TERM GPA			
ACTIVITIES & AWARDS				TEST SCORES:	ASVAB	SAT I®	PSAT®	SAT II®	SAT II®	ACT® COMPOSITE
						M	M	Test:	Test:	
						V	V	Score:	Score:	

	Student Name:							School Counselor:								
	Goal(s) for the Year:															
<div>GOALS</div>																
	SEPTEMBER		OCTOBER		NOVEMBER		DECEMBER		JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH - MAY	JUNE - AUGUST				
	<div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Get organized</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Start a calendar with all test names, registration dates, and fees as well as admissions and financial aid deadlines</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Start a folder to file all correspondence</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Choose top 5 colleges and get applications</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> If applying early decision, check with admissions office for application and deadlines</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Sign up for October or November ACT® and/or SAT I® and SAT II® tests</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Apply for scholarships</div></div>		<div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Request letters of recommendation</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Ask teachers, counselors, GEAR UP staff and others to help you with your personal essays</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Take SAT I®, SAT II®, and/or ACT® exams</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Attend college fairs</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Visit/tour colleges</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Ask colleges about financial aid forms</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Meet with your school counselor to check up</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Keep up with grades and homework</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Submit applications to out-of-state colleges</div></div>		<div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Get financial aid applications from colleges</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Send high school transcripts to colleges</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Males 18 and up must register for Selective Service to get federal financial aid. Register online at www.sss.gov</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Take SAT I®, SAT II®, and/or ACT® exams</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> If necessary, register to retake SAT®, and/or ACT® tests in December or January</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Submit applications to WA state schools</div></div>		<div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Get a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) from your HS, college, or www.fafsa.ed.gov. Begin working on it. Do not send it in before January 1</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Filing the FAFSA online? Request a Personal ID Number (PIN) from the Web site</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Save December pay stubs to complete FAFSA</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Mail admissions applications, if due</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Do colleges have your recommendations?</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Apply for scholarships</div></div>		<div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Submit FAFSA January 1</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> If due, mail admissions applications and/or make sure they've been received</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Make sure all admissions files are complete</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Keep copies of all forms you mail</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Ask your parents to complete tax returns early this year. Schools may want a tax return to prove financial aid eligibility.</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Mail end-of-semester transcripts to colleges</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Apply for scholarships</div></div>		<div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Make sure FAFSA is mailed and received. Call 1-800-433-3243</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> When you get your Student Aid Report (SAR) make sure your colleges of choice are listed</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> If the SAR asks for updated information, or you need to make a correction, do so ASAP. Failure to respond could cost you financial aid</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> College admissions letters start to go out</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Send end-of-trimester transcripts to colleges</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Apply for scholarships</div></div>		<div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Contact financial aid offices to see if your application's complete</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> If you're not admitted to any colleges, see your school counselor for guidance</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Review financial aid awards from colleges. You may need to sign and return one copy</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Decide which school to attend and notify all colleges by May 1</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Apply for on- or off-campus housing</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Respond to all letters from your college of choice by due date!</div></div>		<div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Finalize summer school or job plans</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Double check campus housing arrangements</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Participate in freshman orientation and tour programs</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Take any required placement tests</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Save money for college expenses</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> HAVE FUN!!!</div></div>	
	1ST QUARTER		2ND QUARTER		3RD QUARTER		4TH QUARTER									
	CLASS	GRADE	CLASS	GRADE	CLASS	GRADE	CLASS	GRADE								
TERM GPA		TERM GPA		TERM GPA		TERM GPA										
SAT I®	SAT II®	SAT II®	HS GRADUATION & COLLEGE REQUIREMENTS				Each box equals 1 year of study. Colored boxes are the minimum required for HS graduation and admission to Washington’s public 4-year colleges and universities. Your HS or college of choice may require more.									
V	Test: Score:	Test: Score:	Language and English.....■ ■ ■ ■ □ Mathematics.....■ ■ ■ □ □ Science.....■ ■ □ □ □ World Language.....■ ■ □ □ □				Social Studies/History.....■ ■ ■ □ □ Physical Education.....■ ■ □ □ □ Arts or Acedemic Elective.....■ □ □ □ □ Work-Related Education.....■ □ □ □ □		Other Electives (choose several from the unshaded boxes).....■ Other Requirements (specify below).....■							
M	Test: Score:	Test: Score:														
ASVB	ACT® COMPOSITE	OTHER TEST SCORES	ACTIVITIES & AWARDS													
			TEST SCORES													

Worksheet: Comparing Colleges

Use a pencil to fill in the worksheet on the next page with information about colleges you like. Refer to pages 8-13 for useful Web sites and resources. Or visit with your school counselor or GEAR UP staff. They may have college catalogs, view books, or other resources to help you. Also, bring this worksheet with you when you go to college nights or fairs. Ask questions and fill in the information as you look around.

Remember, the type of college training you need depends on the job or career you want. But the specific college you choose will depend on things like: cost, location, academic programs, financial aid, and entrance requirements (GPA, test scores, etc.). College information does change over time. So, review this information often and make changes as needed.

“A Good
decision
is based
on knowledge
and not on
numbers.”

-Plato



	ACADEMICS	STUDENT LIFE	COST	FINANCIAL AID	ADMISSIONS	ATHLETICS & PERFORMING ARTS
COLLEGE #1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How many students graduate from the school or major in four or five years? What is the academic support program like: study halls, tutoring, faculty hours, etc. What is the average class size? What is the ratio of professors to students (this is often called the faculty: student ratio)? Who teaches most undergraduate classes? Graduate students or full professors? Does the school offer the majors that interest you? Is the major or department highly ranked, popular, or unique? When is the best time to declare your major? (Some majors only admit freshmen) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the college in a big city or small town? (Small towns can be more close-knit; big cities can have more activities) What size town or school do you want? How big is big? How small is small? How close is a movie theatre, mall, bus stop, train station, or airport? Do you care? How diverse is the campus, ethnically and geographically? What are the major hangouts and campus activities? Does the campus have groups or clubs that interest you? What do current and former students have to say about the school? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the tuition and fees charges for one semester, quarter, or year? What can you expect to spend on books and housing? How expensive is the location? (Big cities can be more expensive than small towns) Are there any special fees for classes in your major? (Many science and art classes have lab fees) Are tuition and fee waivers available? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What percent of students get financial aid? How much aid do students usually get? What are the financial aid deadlines? What scholarships does the school/department offer? What are the scholarship deadlines? How long does a 'full scholarship' last? Can you lose your scholarship? If so, how? What are the requirements for getting aid? You may lose aid if you fail classes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How many students apply? How many students get in? What are the average GPA and test scores of admitted students? What are the admissions deadlines? How much does it cost to apply? Can you get an application fee waiver? What tests are required? Is credit given for AP or IB exams or for Running Start or Tech Prep Classes? What AP or IB scores are considered acceptable? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How many student athletes in your sport graduate in four or five years? How many hours per week do student performers practice? Are there any voluntary or optional practices that most performers or athletes attend? What kind of health or injury insurance do athletes get? Are athletes covered by insurance during off-season voluntary practices? How long is the off-season? Who is competing for your position? When does the department head or coach's contract end? Are there any majors that coaches encourage or discourage because of scheduling conflicts? If you get a scholarship, do you keep it if you get injured? What is the coach's leadership style like? How does he/she treat athletes?
COLLEGE #2						
COLLEGE #3						

Worksheet: Comparing Financial Aid Awards

This worksheet is available to help you compare the financial aid offers you receive from colleges. But before you begin, here are some questions you should ask about your financial aid.

- ▶ How do you get scholarships?
- ▶ Will you lose your scholarship, or grant if you get poor grades?
- ▶ What happens to your financial aid award if your family income goes up or down?
- ▶ If you get a scholarship, will the college reduce the amount you and your family have to pay or will they reduce your grant aid or loans?
- ▶ What rules apply to your loans? When do they have to be repaid, and what is the interest rate?
- ▶ How much will your monthly loan payments be?
- ▶ What happens if you cannot make a loan payment or don't have a job?
- ▶ How long do you have to pay your loans back?
- ▶ Is your work-study job assigned, or do you get to choose?
- ▶ How much do employers usually pay work-study students?
- ▶ How many hours can you work as a work-study student?
- ▶ What kinds of work-study jobs are available?

A Word About Student Loans

If one school offers you 70 percent loan aid, another offers you 70 percent grant aid, and your family contribution is the same for both, which offer is better?

In this case, your family's out-of-pocket costs might be the same, but the loans will have to be repaid with interest. The grants will not. Remember, loans are OK, but work study is better, and scholarships and grants are best.

Take some time to calculate what percentage of your total financial aid award must be repaid. This will help you determine the best financial aid package for you.

	Example	College or Program #1	College or Program #2	College or Program #3
Tuition	\$4,675			
Required Fees	\$225			
Room & Board (Food & housing)	\$2,500			
Books and Supplies	\$1,100			
Travel	\$200			
Other	\$300			
Total Cost of Attendance (Add up all costs from above)	\$9,000			
Your Expected Family Contribution (Information from FAFSA report)	\$2,000			
Total Financial Need (Total Cost of Attendance minus your expected family contribution)	\$7,000			
Scholarships	\$0			
Grants	\$3,000			
Loans	\$1,500			
Work Study	\$2,500			
Total Financial Aid (Add up all financial aid from above)	\$7,000			
Unmet Need (Subtract Total Financial Aid from Total Financial Need)	\$0			
Your Family's Out-of-Pocket Costs (Add Unmet Need and Expected Family Contribution)	\$2,000			

College and Career Vocabulary

Academic Elective - Classes you can choose to add to your course schedule that have an academic focus. Often these are core courses students take beyond what's required for high school graduation.

ACT Assessment® - The ACT Assessment® and SAT I® are both widely used admission tests. Many colleges accept either one, but some require one or the other. The ACT Assessment® is designed to assess high school students' general educational development and their ability to complete college-level work. The tests cover four skill areas: English, mathematics, reading, and science reasoning. The ACT Assessment® is curriculum based, and tests what you know and are able to do based on what you have been studying in the classroom.

Admission/Application/Acceptance - You must apply to get into college. The process colleges use to decide who gets in is called admission. Colleges review each application and decide which students to accept. Students receive a letter of acceptance or rejection to tell them whether they have been admitted to the colleges they applied to.

Advanced Placement (AP®) - AP® courses offer college-level coursework in high schools. If students want college credit, they can take an end-of-the-year exam that covers all of the course material.

Apprenticeship - An apprenticeship program combines on-the-job training in a skilled craft or trade with classroom study. The student, also called an apprentice, is trained and prepared for advanced training or employment in a higher-than-entry-level position.

Associate's Degree - To earn an associate's degree, you must complete a program that is at least two, but less than four, years of college work usually at a community or technical college. These programs are often designed to transfer to a four-year college.

Bachelor's Degree - This is the undergraduate degree offered by four-year colleges and universities.

Career Cluster - Groups of jobs that require similar skills and interests.

College - A college is an institution of higher education that awards degrees and certificates.

Commission - Qualified candidates may receive a commission to become military officers. See a military recruiter for more information on commissioning programs.

Community and Technical College - A community and technical college is a two-year institution of higher education. Courses and credits can generally transfer to a four-year college. These also offer work-related and technical programs to prepare students for the world of work.

Core Course - Core courses include math, science, English, and social studies or history.

Cost of Attendance - This is the total cost for one year of college. It includes tuition, fees, books, food, housing, and transportation.

Curriculum - A curriculum is a group of classes needed to complete a program, degree, or certificate.

Degrees - Degrees are what you earn when you complete a program of study. The most commonly earned degrees are: associate's, bachelor's, and graduate.

Doctoral Degree - This is the highest degree offered by colleges and universities. This can take five or more years after a bachelor's degree to complete.

Electives - Classes you can choose to add to your school schedule; they are not required.

Enlist/Enlisted - Joining the military, or someone who serves in the military as a high school graduate.

Expected Family Contribution (EFC) - The amount you and your family are expected to contribute toward college costs. The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) determines your EFC.

Extra-Curricular Activities - These are non-classroom or after-school activities. They can include sports, clubs, student government, community service, religious groups, and social organizations or events.

Fees - Fees are college costs not included in tuition. Fees may be charged to cover the cost of materials and equipment needed in certain courses, and they may be charged for student events, programs, and publications, like a yearbook.

Financial Aid - Financial aid includes grants, scholarships, loans, and part-time employment from federal, state, institutional and private sources. These types of aid are combined to create an "award package." The types and amounts of aid you receive are determined by financial need, available funds, student classification, academic performance, and sometimes the timeliness of your application.

Financial Need - The difference between what your family is expected to contribute and the total cost of attendance for one year of college. Financial Need equals Cost of Attendance minus Expected Family Contribution.

Four-year colleges and universities - These offer certificates, bachelor's (sometimes called four-year degrees), master's, professional, and doctoral degrees in broad subject areas like business administration, history, or biology.

Free Application For Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) - This free application must be filed every year to receive most forms of financial aid, including loans, grants, and work study.

Grade Point Averages (GPA)/Letter Grades - Most colleges consider letter grades and GPAs in admissions.

Guaranteed Education Tuition (GET) - GET allows Washington students and families to buy tomorrow's tuition today. Parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and friends can purchase tuition for a student, and the money can be used at colleges and universities nationwide. To learn more, call toll-free, (877) GET-TUIT or visit the GET Web site, www.get.wa.gov

Guidance Counselor/Academic Advisor - This person will help you choose high school courses, review the requirements for your chosen career, and help you with any problems you may have.

Higher Education - Any program of study or degree program for high school graduates or people with General Education Development (GED) certificates.

Interest Inventories - These are short quizzes that help you learn which jobs or career clusters might be right for you.

International Baccalaureate (IB) - IB concentrates on multi-subject study. Students enrolled in IB can earn a special diploma by taking IB courses and passing comprehensive examinations.

Journey-level Worker/Trade Professional - A master of a specific skilled trade, like carpentry, masonry, plumbing, etc.; one who has studied and worked in a skilled trade for many years.

Lifelong Learning - This is the idea that a person can learn throughout his/her whole life.

Master's Degrees - A graduate degree that is usually added to a bachelor's degree. It usually takes two years to complete.

Merit-based Financial Aid - Financial aid that is given out based on high academic, athletic, artistic, or community service achievement.

Need-based Financial Aid - Financial aid that is given out to students who have a demonstrated financial need.

Occupational Education - These are work-related classes or programs of study. Examples include bookkeeping, keyboarding, and business technology.

Officer - Someone who joins the military after college or receives a commission to become a military leader/supervisor.

Officer Candidate Schools (OCS) or Officer Training Schools (OTS) - These 10-week to 17-week schools train college graduates to become entry-level supervisors in the military.

Open Admissions Policy - Open admissions institutions are usually public two-year community and technical colleges. The term "open admission" refers to an admission policy that says almost anyone with a high school diploma or General Education Development certificate (GED) can be admitted to that college.

Personal Profile - A mental picture or written description of your interests, abilities, values, priorities, and other information.

PLAN® - As a "pre-ACT" test, PLAN® is a predictor of success on the ACT Assessment®. Students take PLAN® in the tenth grade. Like the ACT Assessment®, PLAN® is curriculum based, and tests what you know and are able to do based on what you have been studying in the classroom. The tests cover four skill areas: English, mathematics, reading, and science reasoning.

Private vocational colleges - These are sometimes called trade schools or voc-tech programs. They offer apprentice and journeyman programs for skilled tradesmen like plumbers, machinists, electricians, or carpenters. The length of each program varies, but many can take three or more years to complete.

Proprietary or for-profit schools - These can offer bachelor's and master's degrees, but most offer associate's degrees or certificates in office management, medical assistance, cosmetology, dental hygiene, computer systems engineering, and more.

PSAT® - The Preliminary SAT®/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test is designed for juniors and is cosponsored by the College Board and the National Merit Scholarship Corporation. The PSAT®/NMSQT measures the critical reading, math problem-solving, and writing skills that you've been developing throughout your life. It does not measure things like creativity and motivation, and it doesn't recognize those special talents that may be important to colleges.

Public/Private Colleges - Public colleges are run by the state or other government agency and are managed by public boards. Governments do not run private colleges.

Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) - This program helps students in high school and college pay for their education. In return for scholarship money, students agree to serve in the military. Junior ROTC participants

SAT I® and SAT II® - The SAT I® and the ACT Assessment® are both widely used admission tests. Many colleges accept either one, but some require one or the other. The SAT I® measures your verbal reasoning, critical reading, and math problem solving skills. It tells you how well you use the skills and knowledge you've learned so far, both in and out of school. SAT II: Subject Tests® show colleges your mastery of specific subjects, like English, history and social studies, math, science, and language.

State Need Grant (SNG) - SNG is available to eligible students who demonstrate financial need. Students must be Washington residents, admitted and enrolled at least half-time at a participating institution, and cannot be pursuing a degree in theology.

State Work Study (SWS) - The State Work Study program allows students to earn money and work experience while in college. Jobs are usually part-time, allowing you to attend classes and to study. Jobs are related to your career interests.

Tech Prep - Tech Prep is a four-year program that usually begins in 11th grade. Students take classes in selected career fields and receive college credits in return. While in the program, students work in business and industry, testing their skills in the real world.

Transcript - A transcript is a permanent record of all the classes you take and grades you earn while in high school or college. It may also show any honors or awards you receive.

Transfer of Credits - Some students attend more than one college during their college careers. When they move or transfer from one college to another, they can transfer certain credit hours or classes from the old college to the new one. The new college determines which courses will count toward its graduation requirements.

Tuition - Tuition is the amount colleges charge for each hour of class time. Tuition does not include the cost of books, fees, room, or board (food). Tuition charges also vary from college to college. Students who attend the same college may pay different tuition.

Tutor - A person who helps a student with homework or study skills.

Undergraduate - An undergraduate student is pursuing either a one-, two-, or four-year degree.

University - A university offers undergraduate, graduate, and professional degrees.

Washington Award for Vocational Excellence (WAVE) - WAVE recognizes three students from each of the 49 state legislative districts for outstanding achievement in voc-tech or Tech Prep programs. This grant is equal to about two years of tuition at a Washington college.

Washington Promise Scholarship - Students who graduate in the top 15 percent of their graduating classes, choose to attend an eligible institution in Washington, and have a financial need may be eligible for a Washington Promise Scholarship. Check with your high school guidance counselor or principal for details.

Washington Scholars - Students who graduate in the top 1 percent of their classes can be considered for the Legislature's Washington Scholars program. Three students in each legislative district are chosen for this award. Students then receive a four-year college scholarship. These can be used for undergraduate study at selected Washington colleges and universities.

Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs

GEAR UP is a national effort to encourage more young people to have high expectations, study hard, and go to college.

Washington State GEAR UP is a partnership of the Office of the Governor, the Higher Education Coordinating Board, and the University of Washington.

GEAR UP is funded by the U.S. Department of Education, in collaboration with state government, local communities, schools, colleges and universities, and the private sector.



WASHINGTON
**HIGHER
EDUCATION**
COORDINATING BOARD

917 Lakeridge Way SW
PO Box 43430
Olympia, WA 98504-3430

Phone: (360) 753-7800
Fax: (360) 753-7808
Email: gearup@hecb.wa.gov